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"THE CHAIN WILL HOLD." Page 13. FRONTISPIECE.

Judge Havisham's Will.

BY

MISS I. T. HOPKINS,

AUTHOR OF "BLUE-BADGE BOYS," "THE TALL CHESTNUTS OF VANDYKE," "ARROW HEAD LIGHT," ETC.

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JUDGE HAVISHAM'S WILL.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAVISHAM PLACE.

THE old "Havisham Place" seemed to be centre, focus, beginning, and end with the town and the people of Edinburgh Heights. If a stranger asked direction, the reply was sure to be, "Keep on till you reach the Havisham House, and then turn." If the young people wanted a rallying point, it was, "Meet by the Havisham Place;" or if they came in glowing from a frosty walk, or dreamy from a moonlight one, they were almost sure to have been "as far as the Havisham House and back."

The town had doubled and trebled since the Havisham House was young, but the growth had stretched so evenly about it that its relative position did not seem changed, while the pride of the Edinburghers increased as one touch of modern improvement after another added charm to the solid respectability it always had. The short sloping lawn was a faultless carpet of green, a

bit of conservatory sheltered itself in a corner against a wing, and the pillars of the broad, rounded piazza had just been connected by a simple design of arches that broke the view of river and hills into separate bits of landscape, set as in picture-frames.

Altogether the house had quite as much of to-day as of yesterday about it; and as for its owners, Bentley, or "Bent," the old butler, was the only member of the household who could claim the dignity of years. "Mr. Thorpe," as he still persisted in calling Judge Havisham, the master of the house, though perhaps on the waning side of middle life, was in the full strength and vigor of it still, and never thought of himself as a day older than twenty years ago; while it was only since "Mr. Wynthrop's" sixteenth birthday that Bent had laid a cover for him at ceremonious dinners; and as for "Mr. Cyp," Bent still gave him a chair a trifle higher than the other two.

Ceremonious or every-day as the dinner might be, the laying of the table was a grave and important form in the old butler's eyes, and he had an unfailing habit of going backward a few steps, taking a slow, critical look at his work, and returning for some slight change in the position of a piece of silver or glass. Then he would retreat again, and come as quietly back for another improving touch.

But even after criticism could be defied, something seemed unsatisfactory still to Bent, and a deprecating shake of the head was very apt to say so as he cast his last lingering look.

"There's no balance nor consistency nor considerate effect to a three-sided table," he would murmur as he vanished through the door. "No, nor Providence either, in this case; for it can never be of His pleasure that Miss Vivian should n't stay with her father, and two boys of an age like that! It was quite right she should marry, no doubt; but it's well enough known she 's free to live where she chooses, for all that. The old home is n't gay enough for her, they say; but can't she bring what she likes with her and make it so? There 's no restriction upon any wish of hers, the land knows, while Mr. Thorpe lives. No, no; there 's another reason than that, another reason and a worse one, more 's the pity! though I hope there 's no eye but mine keen-sighted enough to make it out."

Bent had but one confidant in all these half-whispered reflections—the inside of his butler's pantry; and it was receiving them for the twentieth time one soft spring afternoon as the judge's quick, firm step was heard nearing the dining-room door.

Bent started. It was an old servant's right to be interested, but to criticise was quite another thing; and how could he be sure which "Mr.

Thorpe" might consider him to be about if he happened to overhear?

But no; the step was only passing, not coming in, and the pantry door was only open a crack. It was impossible the judge should have heard. He was at the threshold of the front door now, lingering a moment, and then out upon the hard old porch. Bent drew a sigh of relief; Mr. Thorpe was only going to his favorite piazza-chair to read.

"Not that it is in nature," Bent began again, but silently this time, as he gave his silver tray a polish it did not need; "not that it is in nature for a man to feel those he loves best gone against, and never let his tongue say so to himself; but when he 's done that he 's been far enough, and walls have ears, if the old saying is true."

Whoever might be "gone against," however, Bent's master did not seem to be troubling himself about the fact as he luxuriated in the first touch of summer, in spite of the book before his eyes. It was a knotty question in law he was working at, but its cobwebs could not keep off the delicious air, the breath of flowers, or the song of an oriole building in the swing of an elm bough on the lawn.

The book was laid down, now and then, on the judge's knee, and his hand passed hastily through his handsome hair. These first spring days always did bring back the very same old

feeling he had when he was a boy! And what was the use of being anything but a boy, after all? He had a great mind to let some other lawyer take this case, and— What was Cyp doing down there in the grass? if grass it could be called, shaven and shorn like that. What times he could remember in the yard-high rank grass of the old mowing lot, where ground-sparrow eggs and strawberries were found side by side! The book went down at last with a toss; he would know what that youngster was after out there.

"Cyp!"

A head, with a straw hat pushed back and a pair of eager eyes, popped up.

"What are you hunting there, you young rascal? If it's a diamond mine, why don't you call me to go shares?"

A gay laugh was the answer, and a hand held up a bunch of violets, blue as the sky. "Just these, that's all. It's to hang a May basket on Mab's door. When Bent goes home he'll find it, don't you see?"

The whole figure was up now, and coming towards Judge Havisham's seat, the tiny basket in one hand and the flowers in the other; but there was some perplexity after all; that was plain; Cyp's step was hesitating, and there was a wrinkle of heavy thought between his eyes.

"I can't—you see, I can't—tell what I can hang it with," he said, in divisions, as he mounted

one after another of the piazza steps. "I can get plenty of strings, but Mab is too good for a string."

"Too good for a string?" laughed the judge. "You're a cavalier worth having, Cyprian. How would a chain of gold meet your views? There it grows; not on our side of the street, but on the other, where that marauding old lawn-mower of Waite's can't reach. Take yourself over there and bring back a handful, and you have the thing."

Cyp's eyes flew across the street to a bit of roadside banked with great dandelion heads, yellow as the sun, and in another instant he had followed with a flying step.

"It does n't take that youngster long to catch an idea," said "Mr. Thorpe," as he watched him go. "Heigho! I wish I could get hold of one for myself and settle that case," and he glanced reluctantly at his book where it lay. But no; it might lie there. Cyp was back again now, and the dandelion chain should come next.

"Now, sir," said the judge, as the links went together and the chain grew, "the same miserable question that tries every man's work is going to level at this. Will it hold? It's an unpleasant question, true enough, but you'll have to stand it. Hang it on your own door-knob and see what you 've got."

There was a moment of suspense, breathless

on Cyp's part, as the Havisham door-handle had the weight of Mab's basket slowly and cautiously left upon it by an excited little hand.

The chain stretched, the links lengthened, the position of the whole was changed, but—it held!

Cyp drew back the hand that had kept guard under it, ready to save a fall, with a cry of delight. "It will! It will! And it 's the little one that 's doing it, too, after all!" and he pointed to the smallest link of the chain.

Slenderest stem of all, least in circumference by half, it lay against the polished brass of the old knob just where the sharpest strain seemed to come. Its curve was doubled into a sharp corner at one point, but it never flinched.

"Bravo!" said the judge. "Sticks like a brave fellow, does n't it? Now take yourself off. You make a youngster of me, instead of the poor drudge I am;" and he took up his book with a wry face that always delighted Cyp. At this moment the clatter of hoofs was heard, and a finely groomed horse, with a rider firm in his seat, came whirling into the yard. "There! there comes the boy that is half way between us. He has nothing to do, I'll warrant. Take him for your mate. Idling is bad business for an unlucky fellow like me."

A man stepped from the stable at the sound of the horse's feet, and Wynthrop threw him the rein. "Blackwing will need a good rubbing,

Waite; I've given him a great run," he said as he sprang to the ground.

"Yes, sir," answered Waite respectfully, and Wynt turned to enter the house.

Waite looked after him silently a moment as he went, his dark, almost olive-skinned face shaded by his riding-cap and his black eyes cast quietly upon the ground. Then Waite gave a little shake of his head.

"It passes me," he ejaculated mentally; "a young gentleman with all that one has in him, and the quiet way he has with it all. It's there, though, we all know, and folks will find it out some day—the rest of it, I mean."

He faced about to lead the horse away, and so missed seeing that Wynt's eyes lifted just in time to catch a glimpse of the group on the piazza, and that he turned instantly in that direction and went up the steps with a spring.

"Yes!" shouted Cyp, dragging him towards the door. "See; it's the little one that's doing it, I tell you, the smallest one of all!"

"The little one is doing it, eh? How is that?" asked Wynt absently, his thoughts not yet finding the situation altogether clear.

"I don't know. I suppose it thought it would hold on tighter the harder things pulled," answered Cyp, excitement still shining out of his eyes.

Wynt laughed pleasantly, but a low, quiet

laugh that just changed the expression of his handsome mouth, and that Waite would have felt gave emphasis to his reflections of a moment ago. "Not much thinking done in dandelion stems, I reckon, Cyp," he said, as he pushed back his riding-cap, freeing his thick dark hair.

"I say, Uncle Thorpe, isn't there?" contested Cyp; and Judge Havisham turned from his book.

"Eh? What is it?" he asked absently. "Take yourself off, as I told you. Ask Wynt, there; he's first-rate authority. Argue your case before him."

Wynt drew Cyp gently away, got him to the opposite corner of the porch, and threw him into a hammock that swung under a curtain of vines.

"I say it did! it does!" began Cyp again gleefully, striking a defensive attitude as well as he could and preparing for sport. "It thought it would hold on tighter the harder things pulled. Isn't that a good way?"

But before Wynt could answer Bent's full dignity stood in the door. When "dinner was ready" was the moment for Bent to feel that he had brought the full importance of his day to the front.

CHAPTER II.

THE DANDELION LINK.

BENT'S eye, trained to see and consider every inch of his territory in the Havisham House, caught sight of his door-knob instantly, first with a look of alarm for his precious brass, and then with an instant's gleam of understanding towards the two boys, as his equally quick ear caught Cyp's words and the ownership of chain and basket was explained.

But the gleam vanished and Bent was sustaining the dignity of the moment again.

"Dinner is served, if you please, Mr. Thorpe, Mr. Wynt, Mr. Cyp," and with a grave bow he was withdrawing as noiselessly as he came, but Cyp began scrambling out of his net.

"I say, Bent, look out for your own door-handle when you go home to-night—Mab's door-handle, I mean. Do n't forget it or we 'll come to grief."

No one would have suspected from Bent's face that he had any thought beyond the service he was doing as he gravely passed one course after another, serving each faultlessly and forgetting no possible wish or want. But the words he had caught from Cyp seemed to echo with a strange

persistency in his mind, and a good many thoughts followed in their train.

"'Hold on tighter the harder things pull!' That was n't a bad thing Mr. Cyp happened to say." And then would follow another reflection as his eyes rested first on one and then on another of the group he served. "I hope Mr. Thorpe will do the same if there comes any working upon him before long. Miss Vivian will be sure to be coming home, with the weather going on like this. There 'll be some fine company or other she 'll want to show the old place to in June. And I did n't like the way the wind blew the last time she was here. Straws showed it! Straws showed it!" And so on, till Bent took an unnecessary turn into the china-closet to shake himself up. Thoughts that must be kept secret seemed like treason, and he would rather reserve them for a time when he need not mask his face.

The meal was over at last—a late dinner always at the Havisham House, as the judge did not like his day's work broken in upon at an earlier hour—and Cyp left the table in haste.

"Where now, youngster?" asked his uncle, as he went flying from the piazza steps. "Do n't you know your day and dinner come to an end together?"

"Oh, only to Mab's with this," answered Cyp, bringing his basket into sight; and his uncle

turned away satisfied; a run to Mab's and back need hardly take two minutes' time.

The Havisham Place, though in front covered only by the lawn, at the foot of which Cyp had crossed the street to his dandelion bank, in the rear sloped gently away over a much longer stretch. The carriage drive that entered at the front rounded the house and curved down the slope, passing a pet little grove with its fish-pond, and emerging on a narrow street that crossed the place at its rear. On each side of the driveway, but a trifle removed from it and really fronting the street, stood a little lodge or cottage, simple but tasteful, and graceful with flowers and vines. One of these had been built for "Nurse Barbie," and a life lease of it had been given her when, after fostering every child in the family for more than one generation, her services were needed no more. The other should properly have been Waite's, but as he had "no belongings," to use his own expression, Bent's invalid daughter had been installed in it and Bent privileged to call it home as far as his duties would allow.

Cyp had made the distance often in a minute's time, but he was slower to-night, with the safety of chain and basket to consider. They were brought all right to the door at last, and Cyp tested his work again with noiseless and nervous hands. Yes, the "little one" and all the rest were true as steel once more. What would Mab say!

An hour later Cyp's day was done indeed, and Bent, making his last pilgrimage about the house, saw him curled up against the sofa cushion, too sound asleep even for dreams.

Bent nodded imperceptibly to himself. There was a specimen, now, of the very things he had talked too much about to the pantry door that afternoon. What did two men know about taking care of a child like that? If Miss Vivian were here now (as she might be), she would know that a bed was the only thing for him at this time of night. Or if even Barbie were about. The Lord had chosen to take Mrs. Thorpe to himself —the saddest day the Havisham House had ever seen—but he left Miss Vivian. He left one, in his pity, that knew well how to make a home if she would.

Bent went noiselessly out. The last shade was drawn, the last gas jet regulated, and the last key turned, so far as they came under his care; there were a few little matters yet to delay him in the dining-room, and then he would be off to Mab.

Wynt and his uncle looked comfortable enough, certainly, and not altogether objects of pity, as Bent closed the door. Wynt was buried in a book that apparently delighted him and Judge Havisham was as evidently ready for a rest. His opinion was made up as to that troublesome case at last. There was no hobgoblin in it for him any more.

His glance fixed itself upon Wynt as, with elbow on the table, his finely shaped head rested on his hand and his dark grave face, forgetful of everything near, bent over his book.

"Wynt," he exclaimed suddenly, "do you know, I like you better than any boy I ever knew!"

Wynt started and looked up, his dark eyes bewildered for a moment with the suddenness of the recall, and then in another instant a smile and a look of pleasure answered, though the quiet of his manner still remained. "Do you, uncle? I thought better of your judgment, but it is all the luckier for me."

"Now don't give yourself any trouble about my judgment, young man. I've seen a good deal of everything, boys included, in my day; Cyp, there, is all right in his way, just the pet for the old house; a good deal like one of these spring days—a luxury for just now and a promise of better things by-and-by. But I tell you I like that quiet way of yours that doesn't stir till the time comes, but is ready for it with the grip of a lion when it does."

Wynt laughed. "The grip of a lion's nephew, I rather think, if there's any grip about it at all."

"Not a bit of it. You've got your own way, and that's half the reason I like it, good as it is. It was one of the best days the old house ever

marked when you and Cyp came into it. I gave up Vivian to that fine-enough fellow she fancied, on the promise I should be richer instead of poorer by the move. They would make their home together in the old nest, they said. But they seem to spread wings everywhere else instead, and I should be a lonely old fellow enough, if it were not for you."

"Do you think Vivian likes it?" asked Wynt, his face impenetrably quiet again and his eyes returning to his book.

His uncle started and looked keenly at him with a quick glance. "Vivian? Do I think she likes what?"

Wynt hesitated, and then, "Our being here," he answered gravely, lifting his eyes for a moment to his uncle's face.

The judge half rose excitedly, and then controlled himself to a quietness almost equalling Wynt's. "Why should n't she like it? She never knew your mother, it is true. Wynt, your mother—the only sister I ever had—was the pet of my whole soul. When I was young I was way ahead of her in years; there was twice the distance between us that there is between you and Cyp; but I cherished her all the more for that. She was the golden light of the house to me, and she seldom left it till she went out as Vivian did two years ago. It lost her then, but my heart held on to her just the same. I always dreamed

and dreamed I should have her back some day; but I never saw her again. The climate where they took her and kept her—the climate that gave you that berry-colored skin of yours—faded her like a flower, and the very day after I let Vivian go my dream vanished. 'The Lord had led her feet to a new home, fairer than our thoughts could conceive,' the letter said. I hope so, but there has been an aching void in the old one ever since. And it's not for us to judge of the Lord's reasons, but I never thought a man had a right to keep such a girl in a heathenish climate like that! What was a little money-making to her comfort and life?"

Dark as Wynt's skin might be, a flush crept quickly up under it and his eyes shone. The sound of his mother's name always brought that; he could not speak it at all himself yet, although two years had gone by; but his father! Why should his father's faults or follies be brought up against him now?

"I beg your pardon, Wynt," said the judge suddenly. "It's all past and gone now and he is gone with it; one month from the first news brought the second, and another two months brought you and Cyp, and let us be happy together. But I want you to understand about all this. I want you to know how much you and Cyp are to me, and why it is so. And I want you to know what your footing is in this house.

It is your mother's share of it; and whatever happens to me—we can't tell what that may be or how soon it may come, remember, young as I feel—I want you to know that whatever I might have given her I give to you. There is no beam or rafter in the old house that she should not have called home, and as long as you and Cyp want it here it is. There, that is the end of that. Why don't you take that young rascal off to his bed? He'll grow old before his time, hanging about here at such hours."

Wynt rose and went to him. "Cyp!" he said; but there was no answer.

"Cyp!"

Not a quiver in the long eyelashes, and the hand that had dropped over the side of the lounge hung as motionless as before.

"That's a way to sleep, now!" said the judge, coming towards him. "You and I are past that, Wynt. Here, let me have him."

For an instant he stooped over him with a long, slow look. Yes, it was his sister's face again, girl as she had been and boy as this little fellow was. Then he lifted him quickly and was gone with him, over the polished stairs, past the square landing with the old clock, and on to the hall above.

"Here he is, then," he said, as he passed him over to Wynt. "Take care of him now, and bless you, boy!"

He turned and was half way down again before Wynt could answer, but Wynt's pulses were throbbing with all that he had said. Half, a quarter, of that would have been almost more than he could bear.

He clasped Cyp for a moment with a quick, strong pressure. "I'll hold on to *you* tighter the harder things pull," he said, and then dropping him gently to his feet, "Here, youngster, it's rough, I know, but you'll have to wake up now."

CHAPTER III.

HOLDING ON.

MEANTIME Cyp's basket, hanging for Mab, had nearly come to grief. The owner of a heavier, quicker step than Bent's had approached the door, knocked, and in response to Mab's "Come in," was just about to put a grip on the door-knob that would have left little of violets or chain, when through the twilight the visitor caught sight of them just in time. Something was there. What was it? The new-comer hesitated, gave it a close look, and then detaching it as carefully as a big brawny hand could, carried it inside.

Mab knew who was coming and her face was shining. It was a pretty face, even when quiet, with its soft brown eyes and patient look, but it was more than pretty when it lighted up like that.

"Oh, it's you, Jem. Come in. I'm so glad. But what's that you're bringing me? What's in your hand?"

"It's naught of my bringing," answered Jem; "except as I was near bringing it to an end. If it had once felt the clamp of my hand on it, that would have been its last. It was waiting on the door-handle; that's all I know."

"Oh, it's that little Cyp. Violets! Let me have them, Jem, please. He heard me saying how I longed for them, and that I could n't hunt for them as I used."

Jem's large Saxon face did not look pleased. He pushed back his cap hesitatingly, as his hands were free, till a curl or two of tawny hair appeared, then pulled it off and sat down.

"I do n't know why you might n't have told me, if you wanted violets," he said. "I suppose I might have brought them to you as well as another, if you 'd said the word."

"But, Jem, it was only a happening that they were spoken of, you know."

"I do n't know about happenings; I 've nothing to do with them that I know of; only, Mab, there seem so many of them of late. I begin to think you do n't care for me as you used."

The light was gone out of Mab's face now, and a half-frightened, half-wounded look took its place. "Jem! You ought n't to jest with me like that. The very sound of the words hurts me, though there is n't meaning in them, of course."

"And why should n't there be meaning in them? There 's been meaning enough in mine when I asked you more than once if you meant to marry me or not. I 'm tired of this way of going on."

Mab's great brown eyes fixed on him as if they almost uttered a cry. "Tired of it?" she ex-

claimed. "You are tired of it! Oh, I was afraid it would come to that at last! I felt a deadly fear of it in my heart sometimes, but I tried to drive it away; I would n't have it there."

"Better put an end to it then. If you care for me, there 's one proof of it you can give."

There was silence a moment, and Mab's face, that had flushed so prettily when he came in, turned deadly pale and her mouth quivered.

"Jem," she said at last, in a low, quiet tone, "did you come here to quarrel with me?"

"No, Mab," answered Jem, his own face flushing this time, "I want no quarrelling; but it does begin to seem as if you 're trifling with me, and I 'm not a man to like that. If you care for me, why do n't you prove it, as other girls do to men they love? I know you 're not strong, but I reckon I can work for two."

Mab pressed her hand to her heart. Jem's words seemed to have driven a pain through it like a stab. If she cared for him! If *he* cared for *her*, how could he understand so little in all this time of what the Lord had laid upon her to bear?

Jem waited in silence for his answer, and seemed determined to wait. She must give it to him, and she gathered herself up.

"Jem," she said slowly, bringing all her strength to bear, "I never meant to trifle with you, but perhaps I 've done it without knowing it, after all. What kind of a wife should I make

for any man till the Lord sends some help to lift me up from where I am? How many times a day do you think I am out of this chair? Only once or twice for a few steps. What do you think my hands can do but this bit of lace-work that you see me at? There 's not a thing done in this house but what Barbie comes over and puts her hand to, out of pure love; and your wife must keep your home for you and keep it bright. I can bear the pain, I can, though it seems as if it would eat my life out sometimes; but it 's the uselessness that is bitterer than I can tell! Still, I 've hoped and hoped the Lord had a help coming for me, as I said. But it seems no nearer, and perhaps I shall have to see that he means to keep me as I am. I 've shut my eyes against it so far, for your sake and mine, but if it 's true, Jem, I do n't wonder you 're tired, I wont ask you to wait any more."

Jem twisted his cap uncomfortably. "But you do ask me all the same. You wont put an end to it, at least."

A quick cry half escaped Mab, and then her woman's soul rose up. "I *will* put an end to it, then, Jem," she said, "for I believe that is what you are trying to make me do. To your part of the waiting, I mean. My part may be many a long day and year to come yet."

There was a step on the gravel of the carriage-drive outside. Bent was coming. Jem rose hesi-

tatingly. "We can't say anything more now, Mab," he said. "But—"

"No, nor anything different, Jem. It's said for ever, I'm afraid."

In another moment Jem was gone, and Bent had come in in his place. Jem almost stumbled over him as he stopped at the door, remembering Cyp's charge about what he was to look for there.

"What, are you going, man?" Bent asked. "Mab's been looking for you, and it's early yet."

Jem gave some indistinct answer and pushed out into the starlight, crunching over the few steps of driveway between the house and the narrow street, and then his footsteps came rapidly back, fainter and fainter, and then lost by a sudden turn.

"Why, what's taken him so early?" began Bent. "And I was to find something on the door-knob that Mr. Cyp—" But he stopped suddenly as he looked at Mab. Her face was white and her brown eyes were fixed on his face appealingly, while Cyp's violets, their chain crushed by Jem's heavy touch, lay in her lap spilled and forgotten.

Bent stood silent as he looked from her to them and back again. "She looks like some poor wounded thing," he said to himself excitedly. "Has that Jem—"

But he might as well have spoken. Mab read his thoughts.

"No, father, Jem never meant it. He has a good heart, I'm sure, but he can't understand. But it's harder than ever to-night. It never was so bitter before. If I *should* let go!"

What was she saying? What did it all mean? He could not get hold of it yet. "If you were to let go what, Mab?"

"Oh, my Lord's dear hand, my Lord's dear hand! You don't know, you can't think, for I've never let you know, what it is to me to be prisoner here. My life's young yet, father. It's not as if I were old."

"I'd sit there for you, daughter, God knows," said Bent with a little moan.

"Don't," pleaded Mab; "don't say such a thing. I only meant that sometimes it all would go over me, bitter and hard, if I didn't reach up and get hold of my Lord's hand. I reach up for it, and I seem to hold it, you don't know how close! I can almost lay my face against it, and I feel as strong as anybody then, and as contented and as rich. It seems as if his heart was right beside it, so pitying and true, and they both were ready to heal me, if it was only the thing to do. But there's once in a while a cloud comes up, and there seems such a dragging to make me let go, to make me think he isn't there, after all, or he doesn't care, or why does he let things go as

they are? It kills me to have it so and I know it's a cruel lie; but it comes once in a while, and to-night is one of the times. It never was so bad as to-night, I think."

Bent looked at her helplessly. "It's a time when she needs a woman by," he said to himself. If her mother had not died! If Barbie would come in! If she were but the little thing he used to hold when she wanted comforting! "Oh, my little Mab!" he cried, holding out his hands as if he would have taken her.

Then he went up to her and lifted Cyp's dandelion chain. Some of the links were crushed and broken, and some were loosened here and there, but not one had given way.

"There 's only one thing we can do, as I see, Mab," he said. "It 's as Mr. Cyp said about these things here this afternoon. I did n't altogether take what he was saying, but it was somehow that they were 'holding on tighter the harder things pulled.' We *must* do it, Mab. The Hand is there, and we can't let go. It 's all gone with us if we do."

Mab's eyes were "holding" him now, but a sudden new light was gleaming in them. "Did he say that? Did little Cyp say that? Oh, I wonder if it was a message for me! Oh, I will hold on; I will, indeed! It is the Hand that held the very cross for us. How could I ever think it would draw away from me!"

When Mab was asleep that night Bent stole in and looked at her. There was a quiet peace in her face, her cheek rested upon one slender hand, and close beside it, dropped from the pillow, lay a cluster of Cyp's violets, blue and sweet. Bent stood still a moment, then turned and went as softly out again.

"Yes, she'll 'hold on,'" he said. "It was like part of her soul, almost, to lose Jem out of her prisoned little life; more to her than her old father can ever be he might have been if he would. But the Hand that held on to the very cross for us is n't likely to miss when it portions out. And he'll never let her go, that's sure."

But as he sat down a different look came over his face. "What kind of a soul could a man have in him though, lover or friend, to be hard to a girl like Mab! She tries to defend him and say he was n't hard, but I am afraid. If he was, she's better without him than with him, and I hope he'll never cross her path nor mine."

CHAPTER IV.

THE POSTMAN'S RING.

THE "three-sided table" was faultless as ever next morning, and its occupants had never seemed gayer or in better mood.

"Parlor napping has n't spoiled those eyes of yours yet, Cyp," said Judge Havisham, "but look out for yourself next time! You wont get floated up stairs at my expense if you try it too often, I promise you in advance. Bent, hand me— Never mind, there 's the postman's ring; see what he has for us this time, first."

Bent went, and returning laid the letters beside "Mr. Thorpe's" plate. As he did so he recognized the clear, elegant hand-writing upon the upper one, and some of yesterday's thoughts flashed back into his mind.

"Ha!" exclaimed the judge, as he broke the seal and ran his eye over the first page, "coming, is she? Going to take pity on us, and see how the old home looks in June. What do you say to that, boys? Vivian! Hardly ten weeks she has spent in the house in the two years you 've been in it. Well, we wont refuse her. How many gay folks will she bring in her train? I wonder," as he read on. "Coming alone, is

she? Well, the rest will be following soon enough; you may risk that."

He put the letter in his pocket and opened the morning paper, but that did not seem to engross his thoughts as usual, in spite of double-headed columns and foreign news. His eye ran over one paragraph after another disconnectedly, but the letter seemed to stand before them all. And that strange question Wynt had asked last night—did he think Vivian liked it? What could be the boy's idea? What could have put such a thought into his head? To tell the truth, though—and the judge gave his paper an impatient shake, turned it over and back again—he could remember a quick suspicion of that kind having floated into his mind once or twice when Vivian was last at home. But yet how could it be? How should it? It could n't, of course, and yet there were trifles that might be interpreted as pointing that way. Vivian never seemed to look upon them as at home; there was always some remark dropped as to "this visit of the boys," or the time when "the boys would be away at school."

And why had she not kept her promise and her husband's that they would stay by him in the old house? Of course she must have her gay little trips away, but, on one pretext or another, there had been nothing else.

"You can't miss me much, papa," she would

say in her graceful way, "while these little guests of yours are here;" or, "The old home wont be lonely till the boys are fairly launched. School-life is what makes men of them, of course, and it 's a long work. You 'll have time enough to grow tired of me after that."

"As if I wanted to send them away to school!" he repeated half indignantly. "There are schools enough here, except for a four years' college course. I want them just where they are."

But was it possible Vivian did not? How could they in any way interfere with her? Absurd! A mere notion of that sensitive Wynt's. High notions and sensitive ones together; there's where he was like his mother again. He hoped this visit of Vivian's would bring her and the boys together better. They needed to understand each other, that was all.

He walked down to his office with a quicker step than usual, and found work ready for him, as it always was: clients waiting to consult, papers, claims, knotty questions, pleas to prepare. He met every one with the frank, interested manner that won so many friends, listened courteously and closely, or turned to his desk when alone without a moment's loss of time. But, in spite of it all, his partner's keen eye glanced at him now and then as he wondered what there was outside of work that was stirring up the judge to-day.

Suddenly the judge's revolving-chair turned

round and he faced the other with a quick, earnest look. "Wilkie," he exclaimed, "I want you to look out for those boys of mine if anything happens to me. They'll have to have a guardian, and you are the man I want. I've been meaning to ask you, ought to have done so before, for I've asked you already, in fact, in my will—I'd rather trust you than any other man. Will you do it for me?"

There was no answer for a moment, and then, "A heavy trust, is it, judge?" asked Mr. Wilkie with a quiet dryness in his tone.

"Yes; two such boys are a heavy trust for any one; but as for money, they've very little of that; I can't imagine what that father of theirs was doing all those years. However, that doesn't matter. I can make that up to them, and have done so. Now will you do this other thing for me?"

"I never refused you anything yet, Havisham, I believe."

"All right then, and thank you. Now here," rising and going to his safe, "here are the papers showing the little the youngsters have; it was all I could find to gather up for them east or west; and here is my will. So now my mind is settled, thanks to you, and I'll go and get my lunch. I'll outlive you yet ten years, I dare say; I never felt better in my life. But I don't like a thing like that hanging at loose ends."

Meantime there had come a tap at the door where Cyp's basket had hung the night before, and a tall, stately figure, erect as a forest tree, had come in. It was Barbie with Mab's little breakfast-tray in her hand. Not too early, for she knew Mab would not like that; but when the right moment came not a morning had ever known her fail, or the tray fail to bring something dainty and hot, since Mab moved into the house.

Mab was ready for her. She was sure to have pulled herself over to her chair by some means, by this time; but something in her face caught Barbie's notice, and she stood a moment, stately and still, against the door while her great brilliant eyes fixed themselves on Mab.

Barbie was called "old" because the generations she had nursed in the Havisham family were grown out of her reach; but that seemed to be all. Her pulse was as quick and her step as elastic and firm as on the day she first entered the Havisham House, brought from a West Indian island, with just tinge enough of its blood to "give her a right to her head-handkerchief," as she used to say as she wound it about her head.

There was a dignity in the folds with which that "head-handkerchief," or turban, went on that made the Havisham children whisper that Barbie "had a queen's blood in her veins;" but they had to take it out in whispering; they could never get deeper than that.

She went slowly over to the table now, set the tray in its place, and seated herself on a low chair before Mab. "You might just as well tell me, child," she said quietly, her eyes still fixed upon Mab.

Mab gave her a little smile that she thought would cover everything. "The pain is a little sharp to-day, Barbie. I seemed to get a wrench, like, last night."

"And whom did you get it from?" asked Barbie, without changing her gaze.

Mab struggled and tried to resist it, but in another moment her arms were flung around Barbie and a sharp little cry broke out. "O Bab! Bab! I thought I should always have had Jem, at least. I ought to have known better, but I thought I should get well at last. Didn't you think I would get well at last, Barbie dear?"

Barbie's lips were sealed. What did it all mean? No, she did not feel as sure as she would like that Mab would ever be well. There was many a long year of sitting in that chair before her, Barbie feared. But had Jem turned his back on her for that?

"A day never seemed long to me when I was looking for him in at night," Mab went on. "My life's not like others', and he was so much to come into it, you know. He shall not stay a day, though, not a day, if he tires of it!" and Mab's eyes shone suddenly. "But he need not

have tired, if it could have been granted me to get well."

Barbie felt her blood glow to her finger ends for a moment and then cool again. Had Jem been rough to Mab when he saw what every one else had seen so long? No, she would not believe it. But Mab's blind little dream was over, that was plain.

She took Mab's slender hands from round her neck and held them in her own dark, tapering ones, then lifted the oval chin till she looked into the girl's face. "Mab, child, it's a hard thing to sit as a captive," she said; "it's a hard thing for a captive to see the day grow dark; but if your own Lord's voice says through the darkness, 'Sit as a captive,' what then?"

"I'll do it, Barbie!" and then, as a quick light sprang into the face Barbie held, "Did you hear what I got from Cyp yesterday, and what he said about holding on tighter the harder things pull?"

Barbie rose and stood with her full height erect as she looked slowly down at Mab. "Did Mr. Cyp say that? A child like that? He couldn't have said more if all these old eyes have lived to see had been painted for him. There have been strange times and dark times in the Havisham House, mixed in with the blessed ones, as the years have passed, and just that very thing is all that's brought us through—yes, hold-

ing on to what we could see and what we could n't see, lambie, both alike. We could always see what was the right, and we could n't always see the loving-kindness of the Lord right there, tender and true, but the only way was to hold on to both of them strong."

Barbie sat down by Mab and stroked her hand gently. "Lambie," she said, "I never said it to any soul before, but it was the *not* holding on, it was letting go, that brought some of the heaviest troubles the old house has ever seen. That 'll never happen again, thank the good Lord, while Mr. Thorpe lives; but it sometimes lies mighty heavy on my heart what may come after that.

"But you just hold on tight, lambie. The Lord's hand 's there just the same the darkest night, and just longing for the moment to spread sunshine again. As to holding on to the right, *you 'll* never have any trouble about that, but there 's others that may—some others in the house that may." And Barbie shook her head with a troubled look, that was gone again, however, almost as soon as it came.

Nothing could go wrong while Mr. Thorpe lived, and why should not that be for twenty good years to come?

CHAPTER V.

VIVIAN.

THERE was an unusual sense of stir and excitement in the Havisham House as the day went on. It was always in order, always ready with whatever comfort or luxury a visitor could ask; but for "Miss Vivian" no one seemed to feel that his or her department was quite perfect enough. Her own old room, that she had used since a child, looking out into the great linden-tree, must be freshened and "made up," as Burnham, the housekeeper, said. Bent was re-polishing everything that shone before, and Waite was bringing in great bunches from his flower beds—a mass of doffodils here, and hyacinths, violets, everything that the season allowed, finding place somewhere, until fragrance told tales at every turn.

"Miss Vivian always sure to bring her perfumes with her, but she wont need 'em here," said Barbie, who could not be satisfied till she had taken one look over the house herself. Burnham was all very well in her way, but she had n't known Miss Vivian's ways and fancies ever since she was born.

"*I* shall get apple-blossoms," said Cyp, whirling round Wynt in a wild state. "I know she 'll

like 'em best. She'll find a pile of 'em in her room. I say, Wynt, don't you call it awfully splendid for Cousin Vivian to come?"

Wynt laid down his book, seized Cyp in a gyration, and laid him "alongside" on the sofa where he sat.

"I say, don't you?" repeated Cyp, as Wynt only looked down at him without reply.

Why couldn't he answer? Vivian was a bright, beautiful thing to have about and always kind. He didn't know what made him feel that he wanted to keep his arm round Cyp, somehow, ever since he had heard the news.

But Cyp was giving his sleeve a tug, and he became conscious that his uncle's eye was wandering from his paper with little glances, as if he were waiting to catch what he would say.

"It will make gay times for us, Cyp; but don't let her hear you say 'awfully' too many times, not if you take my advice. And as for apple-blossoms, why don't you get them, then? Don't you know she'll be here in half an hour?"

Cyp was off like a rocket, and Wynt took up his book; but he felt, rather than saw, that his uncle's eye turned to him once or twice still.

"Oh, what *ought* I to have said?" he thought. "It is Vivian's home; it's not ours. It's she who is to find us here, and not for two little interlopers like us to receive her. And I hope she

wont mind it much that she does find us, for Cyp's sake. For my part, I'd quite as lieve not be found, if the truth were told. I hate being in any one's house who has never said I was welcome. I'd willingly slip off. Only for that reason though. It is fascinating to have her here."

Bent's almost noiseless step was at the door then. "If you please, Mr. Thorpe, the carriage is ready to meet Mrs. Adriance at the train. Shall Waite drive you? he would like to know."

"Let me drive!" exclaimed Wynt, springing up eagerly. "I'd like to bring Cousin Vivian home."

"Come along then," said his uncle, with a pleased look. "It's time we were off." And in another moment the horses were curvetting out of the yard.

Any young fellow might have been proud to "bring Vivian home," and more than one of Wynt's mates envied him as the carriage, with its party complete, whirled from the train.

"There's been beauty enough, dear knows, in the old house," Barbie used to say, "but this child got almost too much. It seems they all 'queathed her what they'd done with when they laid it down. But they all together had n't that graciousness like a princess that sweeps every one away. We all think we're getting a favor when we're doing one for her; and as for the judge, I

hope she'll never ask him anything he ought not to give."

But neither asking nor granting favors seemed to be in any one's mind just now as Vivian leaned gracefully towards Wynt. "What a man you are grown to be, Wynt!" she said. "Papa, do you remember how you used to caution me against 'naughty pride'? What do you expect when you sweep me into town with such a young cousin as this handling the reins? You'll have to find some way of taking me down afterward. And where is that charming little Cyp? Ah, I see! You did not mean to let me have everything, after all."

"Oh, he's occupied. Some mischief in your room, I think. He's not the scrap of a youngster you left, Vivian. He's chasing hard after Wynt. You'll have two full-grown young men here to walk out with you before long. But where's that husband of yours?"

"Oh, not very far behind. He will follow on, certainly; I'll not be cruel to him very long. But what do you think I had the hardihood to tell him, papa dear? That comes of all your early instructions about not concealing the truth. I told him I wanted you all to myself for a little while!" And she laid her hand with a half-playful, half-caressing gesture upon the judge's arm. "All to myself! Do you think, papa, you can give me some of those dear old walks and talks

we used to have? just we two? I miss them so. It will make me fancy myself a girl again."

A strange mingled expression came into Judge Havisham's face. "Miss them?" How he had missed them! But were the boys—

But before he had time to answer Vivian had turned to Wynt with her charming grace. "And you too, Wynt! You will take me out sometimes, will you not? How proud I shall be. And Cyp— Oh, there the little fellow is. What a little prince!" as a face, very much mixed up in a bough of apple-blossoms, peeped anxiously from a window at the sound of the wheels. He was overtaken in his work. If he had but one half-minute more!

He hurried on, his fingers trembling with haste, but there was time enough. Vivian had her greetings to give every one and everything as she came in.

"Ah, the dear old home! Lovelier than ever, papa!"

And then there was Bent, and Burnham, and even Barbie was in the background. Miss Vivian never had entered the old house yet that she had not stood by with her respects. And by that time Cyp was flying down.

Wynt smiled quietly to himself as Vivian put her arm round the boy and drew him, for a moment, to her side. He could almost see Cyp's heart stand still.

"Ah, old fellow," he thought, "I believe everybody's right and you've got to be an artist by-and-by; you do think such a heap of good looks in people or things. If she were as homely as Burnham, now! Well, I like to look at her as well as you do; but I shall take mighty good care to keep you out of the way whenever uncle is in the house. You can do your admiring when there is no one else about." And he kept to his word.

There was less company than usual at the house the next few days. "You know I'm just here for a quiet visit, papa," Vivian said once or twice in an incidental way; and there were only a few callers and one unceremonious dinner for some gentlemen of the bar. At these times Wynt gave up watching; Cyp might be on the piazza, on the lawn, in the library, or wherever else it was proper for him to appear; but at others there was a most unusual number of engrossing plans—an excursion or a long walk or a lesson in riding Blackwing, and for the evening a book with such an exciting point in it somewhere that Cyp got lost in the dining-room corner where he always huddled up to read. For a few days this would not be noticed, Wynt thought, but he was not sure how long it would work.

"You youngsters are mightily occupied," his uncle said at last, with one of those sudden swift glances that were his way when a thing began to

flash upon him; but he was almost as much occupied himself. These "walks and talks" of Vivian's absorbed most of his free time, and he almost gave himself up to the fancy that old days had returned again.

Bent saw everything, as an old servant will and must, whether he wishes it or not.

"Forty years of caring for the people in a house makes you know them pretty well," he said to Barbie, as he found her with Mab one night; "and Mr. Thorpe's step has n't been so light and quick for many a day; not since those wedding bells rang that lost us Miss Vivian out of the house."

"Wont she stay this time, do n't you think?" asked Mab with a sort of pleading in her brown eyes. "She wont have the heart to go away again after this, father, should you say?"

Bent only shook his head. He would not say so, certainly, to Mab; but there were a great many things he did not say to her. "Many a secret of the Havisham House comes to old Bent, willy-nilly," he used to say, "but it comes to stay. It walks in without knocking, but it finds the door locked when it wants to get out."

Miss Vivian would go, he was sure, when she had stayed long enough for her purpose, whatever that might be. Bent had never known her do anything without a purpose yet, or fail to carry one out when once taken up. As for "having

the heart," did not even Mab, who believed every one to be as good as herself, know that "heart" did not seem to come very often into Miss Vivian's plans?

However, so long as Mr. Thorpe was enjoying so much, Bent was happy. Troubles might as well lie by, if there were any, for a few days.

CHAPTER VI.

A GRIND AT THE MILL.

DOWN in the heart of the town ran a broad street in which the principal business of Edinburgh Heights was done. Not an attractive street altogether, though some rather fine buildings with handsome fronts had grown up among the older and dingier ones. One of these gave up its second floor to the law office of Havisham and Wilkie, while the first floor was taken by the warehouse of Brainerd and Gray. This was a handsome establishment with a general air of getting a little in advance of style in the Heights. Its rooms were separated only by pillars and arches, its windows made a fine display, and there seemed always a good deal going on inside; enough, certainly, to keep a well-satisfied, rather important look among the salesmen moving about.

Wynt was passing it one afternoon with rather an abstracted look. His uncle had called Cyp to "pile in," as he and Vivian drove out of the yard, and had whirled him off between them, leaving Wynt berating himself that he had not taken more care. He knew the carriage was ordered for that drive. Why could n't he have kept Cyp out of the way?

"However, perhaps I'm wrong. He may not be a nuisance for once in a way. Vivian gave him a smile, at least, that set him up sky-high, and it's no use worrying anyway. Oh, it's you, eh?" as he heard his name called and was overtaken by Lee Brainerd, who had just come out of the store.

"I suppose so," answered Lee, "but I don't feel quite sure. I don't believe you'd know who you were yourself, if you got shut up in that old mill."

"Aren't you liking it any better, then? I thought you'd concluded to be a business man with a will."

Lee gave a suppressed little exclamation that seemed to convey a good deal. "'Concluding' means finding that you can't help yourself sometimes, as I suppose you have found out. You know it was a heavy grind on me always to work at anything but books. I would have worked at those if they'd let me. But there was no chance. I'm to have an interest in the old prison at twenty-one, and be full partner at twenty-five, and I thought I could fight through till that time if I took the bit square in my teeth. But the more I see of it the more I find it's all the same thing. Partner or youngest clerk, it's grind, grind, at the same old wheel."

"I thought partners lived in office easy-chairs," answered Wynt laughingly, really trou-

bled at the cloud upon Lee's face; but Lee's tones were even more bitter as he replied,

"And what then? You're simply writing down how many easy-chairs and rugs you have sold to somebody else. Bah! I tell you, Wynt, twenty-one years old will never see me there. I'll be driven out if I can't get out any other way. I always have meant to behave myself, but I believe I'll give it up. If people wont let you live, anyway, you may as well—"

"Look here!" interrupted Wynt, passing his arm through Lee's, "what's the use of talking a lot of stuff that you don't mean? A man that's a man can 'live' if they put him down in a coal mine, I suppose, and you and I want to be men together by-and-by, you know. I'm sorry it goes so hard just now, but I'll tell you a thing Cyp got off the other day. He says, 'Hold on tighter the harder things pull.'"

The frown between Lee's brows seemed to loosen a little. "Cyp? What does a young rascal like him know about holding on? He's got nothing to do with it yet."

"Not much, but his day'll come. He just made a hit, that's all. Not a very bad one either, eh?"

Lee's brow contracted again. "Don't preach, Wynt. It's easy work, but lazy as I am, I don't like it. I should like to see you try what 'pulling' means at a place like Brainerd and Gray's."

"Perhaps you will some day," answered Wynt so quietly that Lee looked suddenly into his face; but he could not read it and they walked on.

"Come up to the house," Wynt said presently; "take a canter with Blackwing, and he'll toss the blues out of you and bring you back all right."

"No, thank you. It's no use pretending to be some one else for half an hour and then coming back to the old grind. I'll stick where I am. There comes Jem Dent, our porter. I believe he's found life isn't worth having in the store as well as I. He used to be a merry sort of fellow. What do you suppose is making him look so black? I've noticed him for a week."

"He does look rather down," said Wynt after they passed; Jem had only given a quick nod to to the two without lifting his eyes. "You can't very well call him black, though, with that yellow hair of his. I wonder what it is." And his thoughts ran across to Mab's cottage by the gate. No; Mab was certainly all right. He had seen her at the window twice within a week. "Come, Lee," he repeated; "come up to the house. I'm all alone there for an hour."

"No. The truth is, I'm out on an errand for the store. I've a dozen minds to forget it, though. Forgetfulness is a good quality to cultivate if you want to work yourself out of a place."

Wynt went home with a troubled feeling that he could not shake off, though he tried to persuade himself that it was unnecessary after all.

"He can't mean it," he said to himself. "It must be just a mood he has got into to-day, when he likes to hear himself talk. I don't wonder it does seem 'a mill' once in a while, but he knows as well as I do that 'holding on' does make a man of a fellow in the end. He's all right, though, I am sure; he must be. But I don't like that look he had to-day. I wish they would let him off, but I suppose they can't see it. He's the only one in the whole family who does not like a store, and very likely they think it's a freak."

He turned into the yard abstractedly; he would take Blackwing himself, he thought, and he had nearly reached the stable door before he saw that the carriage had returned and the horses were in their stalls again.

"Waite," he said, "have my uncle and Mrs. Adriance come in so soon?"

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Adriance changed her mind and did not care to go far to-day."

Wynt bit his lips. Had Cyp spoiled the drive? He must see where he was now, at least, and he went quickly into the house.

There was no one in the library; could they be in the drawing-room? No; and he stepped towards a door leading from that room to the

piazza. The door opened close upon a sheltered nook, screened from the rest of the piazza by vines, and voices from behind the screen fell upon his ear. His uncle's sounded earnest and almost excited, while Vivian's answered in those same smooth, daintily modulated tones that were part of her fascination at all times.

"I say, as I've said before, I do not agree with you, Vivian. Why do you worry me about it?"

"Dear papa, if there is any subject that worries you, let us never mention it again. But think what Rugby has done for English boys. You surely feel that there is no such soil as school life to make a thorough, manly—"

Wynt had turned and was half across the drawing-room again, on his escape, before he could leave the rest of the sentence behind. Through the library and the dining-room door he passed.

Yes, there was Cyp in his old corner, and deep in that book again!

Wynt went over to him, got him out with a quick little lift, and sat down with him in his arms. "So that is the way you go driving, is it, young man?"

Cyp laughed; but something in Wynt's face caught his notice, and he put his hand quickly up against it. "Your face is hot as fire! What's the matter with it?" he said.

Wynt took his hand down and held it quietly. "Tell me where you went, Cyp."

"Oh, only out to the Giant's Fall. Vivian was tired, she said. I say, though, Wynt, isn't she fine! **She had her arm round me all the way.**"

CHAPTER VII.

THE JUDGE'S PROMISE.

THE conversation Wynt had so hurriedly left was turned, almost instantly afterwards, by Vivian's skilful tact. There was only one more velvety sentence that might drop an additional weight, and she glided off into a running series of sketches of her last two months among the Alps.

"And if I come home in the fall to stay, dear papa, as it will be so lovely to do, there will be a good many friends, you know, at different times, and do you really think so much petting and distraction is good for boys? They are such dear fellows. Every one would have to notice them, you know."

That evening Bent served the dinner with the feeling that a shadow had fallen somewhere, wherever that might be. Vivian and Cyp were in the best of spirits, and with a merry banter going on between them that kept Cyp in suppressed but continual glee. Wynt was silent much of the time, but that was too much his way to notice. It was Mr. Thorpe who did not seem like himself.

The old butler ventured one or two quiet

glances into his face, but he hardly needed even those; it was "in the air."

He stole one at Vivian as she sat, looking never handsomer, in her graceful evening dress, her color fresh and her eyes sparkling at Cyp. Her "fatigue" of the afternoon seemed to have vanished away.

"She's done it though," said Bent silently to himself. "She's laid a touch somewhere that's just clouded in the special bright time she'd been making Mr. Thorpe for a week. I said she had a plan. I said she never came home this quiet way without one, and she's been feeling its way along till she's touched a tender spot. I know! I haven't kissed her in her babyhood, and carried her in my arms many a day after, and watched her every day since, without knowing her as well as I love her, and I love her well. But she never wanted anything yet that she didn't get it, in all those years."

Another week passed, and Bent's reflections only deepened and strengthened. The week following was to bring Mr. Adriance and a gay troop, and why wasn't "Mr. Thorpe" making the most of this? To every one's eye but Bent's, and perhaps to Wynt's, he was doing so; but even Wynt felt that there was a pressure somewhere—something troubled his uncle. Something was certainly weighing, that had shaded

off that light-hearted delight of Vivian's first week at home.

"Yes; I could n't keep Tom off any longer," Vivian was saying, with her well-bred little half-laugh. "He 'll be sweeping in the moment my two weeks are up, and bringing a few friends, dear papa. You are always so kind; I don't feel the least hesitation in taxing hospitality here."

And as the day approached Bent found himself wishing it would make haste. "I 'd rather see Mr. Thorpe whirled out of his quiet and peace, as he will be, than to see that look he don't mean any one to see getting stronger and deeper in his face. And I'd rather the house had been left in its loneliness a hundred times. Well, whatever it is, I hope he'll forget it when Miss Vivian and her troop are gone. I never knew trouble seem to lie long on the threshold with Mr. Thorpe."

The next day, now, was to bring the "troop," as Bent called the expected visitors. Burnham had been overflowing with importance, and room after room had been left in immaculate "spick and span" by her hands, till even Barbie and Vivian were satisfied. Bent had got out his extra silver and table linen, and even his extreme imagination could see no finishing touch wanting in his own sphere when evening came.

So if the judge and Miss Vivian would only

come in from the walk she had asked him to take, Bent would go home to Mab. Mab needed all the heartening she could get, poor child, since Jem's visits had dropped off.

He grew almost impatient. Miss Vivian was having one last talk with Mr. Thorpe, he was sure; but still it was late to be out, in the dampness of an evening like this.

Then suddenly he was glad of it, after all. There was the gas in the east parlor. Miss Vivian always liked to find it lighted when she came in, and it had gone "clean out of mind" to-night.

He seized his torch and went with his usual noiseless step into the forgotten room. The judge's private study opened from it, a heavy Eastern drapery, that Vivian had brought him from abroad, curtaining it off. As he passed this he started as a low, smoothly modulated voice fell upon his ear.

"And so, dear papa, wont you yield to my judgment for this once? Wont you promise me this one thing? You surely could trust me, when I know your wishes so well."

Bent turned to flee, as Wynt had done a few days before, but he could not get out of hearing before the answer came.

"Very well, Vivian, I promise, if you cannot be happy otherwise. And now let us not mention the subject again while you stay. Let me have

your visit in peace. When you are gone I will—"

That was the last word Bent caught. He was safe across the hall and in his dining-room, with the door closed fast behind him, before any more could have been spoken.

He got his hat and went down the steps of the little back porch leading to the carriage drive. He could not go to Mab yet; she would surely see trouble in his face. Where could he go?

He walked back and forth little distances on the driveway hurriedly, and then got under the shadow of a giant old willow and leaned against the trunk; then out again, and over to the railing of the little fish-pond, farther on.

"I'm sure it means trouble," he said over and over to himself with a little moan. "Not that I can think, or would think, what it may be, but it's there. Mr. Thorpe never refused her anything yet, nor can't; but he'd never have kept her pleading if he had n't felt there was trouble in what she asked. And who is there left to feel trouble in the family now but Mr. Wynt and Mr. Cyp? Yet it can't be he would let even her bring anything on them!"

Bent took a little stone that lay on the railing and plashed it down into the pond below. Then he walked over to the old willow again and then restlessly back to the rail. Somehow he did not

feel ready for Mab yet. Picture after picture of past days in the old house rose before his eyes—bright, joyous ones among them, but the dark ones seemed to stand foremost to-night.

"And scarcely ever one of them," he went on, "scarcely ever one of them need have come—except when it pleased the Lord to send the still messenger in—if some one had n't failed of 'holding on,' as Mr. Cyp might say, to the right and the true. I may be mistaken—I know I'm a foolish old man—but it weighs on me that Mr. Thorpe has let go something to-night. I'm afraid he has n't been 'holding on tighter the harder things pull.' But no," and he brought himself up with an indignant little shake; "it would be the first time in his life you ever knew it of him, would n't it? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Bent!"

He gave his hat a determined little push backward, till a stray lock or two of his fine silver hair made its way out. There had been enough of this, he thought; and he started for the cottage with a quick step.

Mab looked up with a bright smile. "You 're late, father dear," she said. "But I suppose you 've had fine doings to get ready for at the house."

Bent glanced into her face with a quick look. There was a clear light shining in it that he could not mistake. "*She's* all right!" he said hastily

to himself. "She's not one there's need to be worrying about any more, at least. She's got her Lord's hand again, that's clear, faster and faster every day."

"Yes, child," he answered, "fine doings and high doings, we may be pretty sure. We don't see Mr. Tom Adriance bring a company into a house with less. But we're ready for them, and they can be young but once. I don't forget that. I like them to take all they can."

"Father," said Mab again suddenly, "who do you think I had in here to-day?"

Bent looked at her quickly. Was it possible Jem—could that be what was keeping her up? "It's not some one that has put that bright look in your face, eh?" he asked.

Mab blushed crimson. "No, father, no!" she said hastily. "Not if you mean some one who wont come any more. If I've got any bright look, it's because I'm 'holding on' better again. What a queer thing that was for Mr. Cyp to have said! We'll all be repeating it after him, I believe."

"I don't know what we could repeat better. But who is it that was in? You haven't told me yet."

"It was Miss Vivian."

"Miss Vivian?" asked Bent hastily.

"Yes; why not?"

"Oh, no reason at all," he answered, covering

his little start as well as he could. "And what did she have to say?"

"I can't tell you more than I ever can. I never know what she has said when she's gone, though I listen while she's here as if I had a spell. She brought me this bit of a soft shawl to throw round me; see, it's like a net." And Mab held up the filmy pink thing. "And I can copy the stitch and knit more. My needles are just longing for something new. But she did say one thing, father, that came across me as strange. She spoke of Mr. Wynt and Mr. Cyp, and how fine they were, and that Mr. Thorpe was enjoying their visit here so much. It does n't concern me, I know, but I always took the idea they were made at home in Havisham House."

Bent did not try to cover his start this time. He sprang up and looked excitedly at Mab. "Now the contrary of that can't be said by anybody. They *are* at home in the house, if I ever understood Mr. Thorpe's meaning about anything yet," he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

THORNS IN THE PILLOW.

THE "gay doings" Mab had talked of began in good earnest the next day. There was a quiet elegance about it all, of course, for Vivian could not do a thing in any other way; but a merry, light-hearted set of people rode and walked and chatted and filled the house in one way and another, and for the time every shadow seemed to vanish away.

If anything had weighed on the judge, it was, to all appearance, thrown aside and forgotten. He was the handsome, dignified host, but good company for the youngest, for all that. And there was no more hiding away of Cyp; he was called here and there by every one, "spoiled altogether," Vivian said, shaking a jewelled finger at him playfully; and Mr. Adriance had taken an extraordinary liking to Wynt and wanted him in everything.

"Really, Tom," Vivian laughed, "for a butterfly, time-wasting fellow like you, that silent, dark boy is a strange fancy, it seems to me. If I find you shaded down anywhere at the end of the month, I shall know where the benefit came in."

"Don't concern yourself about me," answered

Tom. "The boy has stuff in him that I like. Wynt! Where are you, there? I want you to help me throw my new trout-fly over at the fall. We'll be back in good time for dinner, if we can get off at once."

Judge Havisham stood on the porch and watched them off with more satisfaction than he allowed to show itself in his face.

"I didn't think Tom would cotton so to Wynt," he said almost elatedly to himself. "I knew every one would like the youngsters, both of them; I was safe about that. But I should have said Cyp was the one Adriance was likely to pick up like this. He couldn't please me better, though. I hope they'll be more like brothers than cousins some day."

But four summer weeks do not take long for flight. Almost before any one consented to say so they were drawing to a close, and plans for the next move must be made and spoken of. The guests were to scatter in different directions, and Vivian must see Norway. That had been left out by unlucky circumstances last year, and there was just time now.

"Only a summer trip, papa," she said gayly. "You'll hardly know I am gone. Autumn will steal a march on us, and then—" and she turned, as she had a way of doing when almost out of a room, putting her face back again, full of smiles—"then, papa, if you tempt me *very* much, who

knows but I may come and settle down upon you for ever more!"

There was no "hardly knowing," however, when she was really gone. The house seemed empty and echoing, and Judge Havisham was glad to leave it and get away down town to his office and his work.

Bent watched him quietly when he came back and as one day and another passed.

"It's no use!" he said. "Whatever thorn Miss Vivian put in his pillow is worrying him again. If he pushed it away for a while, it is back again, sharper than ever, if my old eyes do n't mistake."

Whether they did or not, they were the only ones that suspected any unpleasant weight upon Judge Havisham's mind. He was abstracted and preoccupied at times, it was true, but no one could be otherwise with the amount of work he was carrying at the office, and of late not unfrequently bringing home. This "bringing home" Wynt noticed instantly as something entirely new, and too much, he felt sure. His uncle had always depended upon free life and rest when he came into the house.

"Is this going to last very long?" he asked quietly one evening, as his uncle came into the library with a package of papers in his hand.

"Is what going to last?" and the judge looked quickly at Wynt, whose dark eyelashes had hardly

lifted while asking the question, as he sat over his own book.

Wynt made a little gesture towards the papers. "You always teach me that when a day's work is done it should *be* done, and a man should be making himself over for the next."

Judge Havisham laughed. "I do seem to be going against my own doctrine; but it's good teaching, for all that. I am overworking a little just now, perhaps, but I don't see any way out. It wont last long though, and I'm pretty tough, you know. And I keep out of the study, don't you see? I do it, as well as I can, out here, where you young rattlebrains are. That keeps me fresh."

Wynt had noticed it, and that he and Cyp were always called for, since Vivian left, if out of the way when his uncle came in. Cyp revelled in the fact, and the evening work he thought best of all.

"I'm not hurried off up stairs after dinner then," he confided to Mab as he stopped under her window one day. "I 'hang around' awfully late, don't you know, and uncle stops every now and then for a rest, and we have such times! They're droll, no end."

As for the "not lasting long," however, there seemed some mistake about that, and the impression went over the house, and even out to the cottages, that "Mr. Thorpe" was carrying too much.

It was plain enough how it happened, though; any one could see that. One of the prominent lawyers in town had retired, and there were two large estates to be settled by the Havisham firm, and Mr. Wilkie was ill.

"They say that most of Mr. Wilkie's practice comes over to him," Bent said one evening to Barbie and Mab. "And they say Mr. Wilkie wont be out for a month; and how it's all to be doubled with Mr. Thorpe's share passes me to see. We all know there's not a lawyer in the county with the clients that come to him."

Barbie, erect and turbaned, fixed her great brilliant eyes upon Bent. "Then he ought to say no," she said suddenly. "We don't want a bent bow breaking in the old house. I have seen that once, and enough."

Bent did not answer. He had seen it with her, and "enough" also, when the judge's father had broken down in middle life from trying to carry his own affairs and a scapegrace brother's at the same time. That was one of the bitterest times the old house had ever seen.

"I don't get sight of the young gentlemen once, these days, to half a dozen times in the past," Barbie said, with a quick change of the subject in hand.

"No; Mr. Thorpe keeps them with him every moment when he's in the house, since Miss Vivian left; and he's not had a horse out without

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one or both of them any more. If there's one thing on earth he takes pleasure in, it's the having them about."

Meanwhile Wynt had found his thoughts turning so often to Lee Brainerd and his mood of the other day that, in spite of the many distractions at home, he had looked into the store more than once in business hours, hoping to satisfy himself that "Lee was all right."

"He never could have meant all that nonsense, of course," he repeated to himself. "Lee's got too much man in him to flunk at a little 'grind,' as he calls it. He's just where he doesn't like to be just now, it's true, but half the fellows in college, where he does want to be, could say the same thing, I suppose."

The first visit did not give him much satisfaction. Lee was busy for part of the time, and for the remainder, though cordial and friendly, said what little he did say in a half-sneering, sarcastic way not at all his own.

"If you wont talk, I wish you were busier," Wynt laughed at last; "for I came in to see what you really do here. I want to see if it's so very bad."

Lee started and faced about. "Look here!" he said, with a little sidewise movement of his head towards a distant part of the room, "do you see that fellow over there? That's Warnock, our managing clerk, and what I have to do is prin-

cipally to submit to him. How would you like to be under a man like that?"

"Could tell you better if I had the pleasure of knowing him," replied Wynt, determined not to be put down.

"It's a loss! Now what do you think of this? I took hold of a country customer to-day and did my best on him for an hour; got him just worked up to where he was ready for a big bill of goods, just going to say the word, when in slipped Warnock, bowing and smiling, slid me off to one side, picked up the customer where he was, sold him the bill I had worked up, and quietly sent his own check into the office with it. That puts it to his credit as salesman, you know, and leaves me with only one or two odd pieces of work to show for the day."

"That was pretty bad. Can't you get even with him again?"

Lee gave a sarcastic little laugh. "It's the uneven part of the thing that goes so hard. However, I can get beyond them all if I can't get up with them. They don't want any poor salesmen in here or any that they hear tales of from outside. Do you understand? I can take things by the lazy handle through the day and find more ways of making up for it in the evening than they like."

"Lee," exclaimed Wynt, "what are you talking about? You don't mean you would—"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. It's not so very bad when you come to try it. I had a gay time last night with a set of fellows that you would never know. I've got a horrid headache for it this morning, it is true."

Wynt fixed his eyes on him with a bewildered look. Lee must be "talking to hear himself talk." He knew him through and through, he thought. "Now what is the use of all this nonsense, Lee? I'll come in again when you're 'at yourself.' Or get half an hour off and come along for a walk. That will take your headache off."

Lee smiled and quietly took out a cigarette. "Will you smoke?" he asked.

"No, and I wont believe you will either. What do you mean by all this humbuggery, Lee?"

"I mean exactly what I say. I detest the store, and I'll get out of it if I can. If I can't, I don't care what I do; that's all."

"Lee Brainerd! You don't seem to remember that I know you pretty well. You have just as high notions of the stuff a man is made of as I have."

Lee smiled. "You don't think having a gay time makes a man of a fellow?"

"No, I don't; nor you either; not the kind of gay time you are talking about."

"Well, now, I tell you there are lots of fellows that do. Perhaps they're right and we're wrong.

I can't quite see it myself yet, it's true; I suppose I'm not going to make a man, that's all. I've been slowly making up my mind to it for the last six months. I could n't make one if I tried in this old mill, you see."

"What's the reason you can't? Do n't you know half the tall men in the world have worked their way to it through what they did n't like? That's what made the bone and sinew of them. How many of the fellows tied to the books you're sighing for like digging over them, do you suppose? How do you suppose the Lord 'liked' helping in the carpenter's shop or having crowds of poor beggars wanting something all the time?"

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Lee; "if you get to talking about that!"

"Why should n't I talk about it? I would n't if you did n't seem to forget it. What do you suppose he did those things twenty or thirty years for, if it was n't to show us how to be a prince and a man among men? If he'd said he 'could n't stand it' and left it, do you think we'd be worshipping him much to-day? Now do n't say I'm preaching, for it's no such thing. I have n't any too much courage of my own, and if you ever see it giving out, just try to give me a lift; that's all. Tell me to 'hold on tighter the harder things pull.' There's a customer after you. I'll leave you to 'do yourself proud.'"

Wynt stopped under Mab's window as he passed it on his way into the grounds from the rear. It was Mab's way of "receiving," and it was hard to pass those brown eyes of hers without a word. Her days were pretty long at the best, as every one knew.

"Are you where you like to be, Mab?" he asked with a sudden impulse, still thinking of Lee. Here was something, now, that might be called "shut up."

Mab colored up for an instant, and then her eyes shone. "Where I like to be, Mr. Wynt? Yes, of all places in the world! I would n't move out of it to be as free as a bird."

Wynt's eyes were dropped to a little pebble he was kicking. He could n't get over having blundered so to Mab.

But Mab went on, with a pretty little half-laugh that just showed her pearly teeth. "Mind, I do n't say I would n't *be moved* out of it, Mr. Wynt," she said. "If it should come my Lord's time my heart would spring out for joy. But so long as he keeps me here there 's some blessed thing he 's working out by it that I would n't miss for my life."

"Then if you should 'be moved,' you 'd be sure it was all right?"

"Yes, sure, if I 'd bided my time."

CHAPTER IX.

A BROKEN BOW.

WYNT mounted the piazza steps and passed through a side door opening into a little hallway near the foot of the stairs. He would have been over them with a bound, but he suddenly found some one confronting him in the way. With the change from the summer glitter outside to the cool darkened hall, for an instant he could hardly see, and it seemed almost as if some statue had been moved out of place, so silent and motionless the figure stood.

"Bent!" he exclaimed; "were you looking for me?" And then, feeling sure he was not, that he was only waiting for him to pass, he turned towards the stairs.

But Bent started and stretched a hand across them. "Not yet, not quite yet, Mr. Wynt, if you please," he said; and at that instant a confused sound came to Wynt's ear, a heavy muffled trampling of feet overhead.

Where was it? In his uncle's room? It certainly was. He felt his pulse stop, with one horrible feeling of standing still for ever, and then leap forward again, and he made a movement to pass Bent.

"I beg you wont; not quite yet, Mr. Wynt!" pleaded Bent. "Dr. McPherson is there, and he'll have everything right. The rest will be down presently, and then—"

But in an instant Wynt had dashed his hand away and sprung past. "Remember, I'm his oldest son now, Bent," he said, and he was gone.

Bent wrung his hands helplessly. "It's not a thing for young eyes to see," he said; "not for young eyes. A bent bow broken, as Bab would say. Old ones like mine are used to trouble, used to it, I say." And Bent wandered about the hall as if distracted.

Would they never come down, all those men who had carried Mr. Thorpe up? There might be an excuse then to go and see what was left for him to do. Mr. Cyp might be coming in, though. He must be on the lookout for him. *He* must n't slip by!

And then he paced the other way and began saying what an old blockhead he had been. Mr. Wynt must go up sooner or later. What difference did it make? Of course he must go up. He was quite right. And Mr. Thorpe might have been wanting him, though he could not speak to say it. Who was going to know what he did want after this?

Meantime Wynt had reached the upper hall and was standing in his uncle's room. In the hall he met two or three men, he could not tell

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how many. He only knew that some of them he did not recognize, and that he did see Jem Dent, and that they all crowded against the baluster and stood respectfully waiting for him to pass. He felt that they tried not to look curiously at him, but that they did so after all.

All this was only an instant's impression, something that he saw without seeing it, and he stepped quickly inside the room. Who had a right there if he had not? Why had they not sent for him before?

He met his uncle's eyes instantly, clear as he had seen them two hours before, and brightening with a quick look of welcome as Wynt came in. Then the judge held out his hand.

Wynt took it quickly. He knew he wanted him there! But why did he not speak? Why did not Dr. McPherson speak?

"What *is* it?" he exclaimed. "Has any one hurt you, uncle? Are you hurt?"

He felt his hand pressed more tightly, but still no reply.

"I do not think he can speak to you, Wynt," said the doctor gently. "He was not able to walk home, and the power of speech seems affected also, more or less. We cannot tell exactly about it yet. We must wait for to-morrow and hope to find him more like himself."

Wynt flashed a look into the doctor's eyes. He knew it all now. The doctor need not tell

him. He knew even the very word—the very name—paralysis! And they would *never* find him "more like himself." What was the use of pretending that they would?

He covered his uncle's hand with both of his and kissed it with a quick, passionate movement. Then he looked for the other one where it lay at his side and lifted that.

How strange it felt in his touch—so unlike a thing of life! And the heavy arm seemed holding it back like a weight. That handsome hand that Wynt had been so proud of, a hand that had always expressed so much; and now—what a strange, passive outline it had!

Thank heaven, it was the right hand that was free. If the doctor should by any possibility be right, if part of this horrible thing should disappear, he would have that at least.

These thoughts passed in a flash, and—what was his uncle trying to signal to him?

The doctor knew. He was turning towards the table. He had lived these things through so many times. "Have you pencil and paper here?" he said. "He wants to use them; he wants to say something to you, I think."

Wynt turned instantly to a small desk at the other side of the room and brought them. The doctor drew a memorandum book from his pocket, laid the paper upon it, and held them quietly under Judge Havisham's hand.

Wynt watched so eagerly. The hold of the pencil was strong; surely there was something left yet.

The doctor handed him the paper and he read, "Don't worry, Wynt. We'll get over this." Wynt handed it to the doctor.

"All right!" he said cheerily. "Now, then, quiet is the only way to it. You and I must go, and I am going to send Barbie up for a while till I get some one in who has a stronger lift than she." And he got Wynt out at the door. Barbie stood like a statue a little way from it. He made her a signal and she went noiselessly in.

"Now, doctor," Wynt said, turning at the foot of the stairs, "tell me the truth."

"I'd tell it to you if I knew it, Wynt. We can't say positively about these things always, you know. But I'll tell you this. Your uncle believes what he said to you. That is plain in his face. He remembers that two hours ago he had never felt better in his life, or thought so, at least, though actually he must have been overdone. He has been working very hard, and—By the way, has anything been troubling him of late, anything especially pressing on him, so far as you know?"

Wynt shook his head. Bent turned and walked away with a little gesture that no one saw.

"Well, we cannot tell. These things have causes out of sight, many times, and I'm sorry

to say they 're in the family once or twice here. Now there are only two medicines to use: quiet and good hope. I will give orders that whenever he asks for you you are to be called; but do n't stay over five minutes in the room. And while you 're there let him think you feel as he does, if you can. Take the ground that all will come out right. Do n't say much, but just have that air, you know. It will be hard for you, my boy; but it 's a hard time altogether for the old house. I 'm sorry, though, to have you get the touch of it. You 're young to begin." The doctor hesitated and looked at Wynt as if he hated to leave him, but in another moment he was gone.

Wynt stood as if he were turned to stone, the doctor's words clear as arrows in his mind at one moment, and at the next repeating themselves in a confused, dreamy way. "Begin"? Did the doctor think this was the beginning with him? And his memory flashed back in an instant to the first touch of sudden terror, two years and a half ago.

But now!

It seemed to him he could not breathe. A weight lay upon him everywhere. Then he lifted his own hand and looked at it. How strange it seemed that he could move it! Why could not his uncle move his?

Then he raised his eyes and caught sight of

Bent, leaning against a doorway at the end of the hall, his face pitifully white, his hands clasped and dropped hopelessly before him.

Wynt started and went over to him. How heavy his feet felt as he lifted them!

"Bent, old fellow!" he said, laying a hand on his shoulder, "don't! We must take courage. It may not be so bad. See what Mr. Thorpe wrote for me himself. He can write, Bent, don't you see? He says he shall get over it. To-morrow, perhaps, it will not seem so bad."

But when he had got away from Bent he turned and was gone in an instant. Anywhere, somewhere, to be alone!

His uncle's little study—that was the best place. He drew the curtain behind him and leaned against the wall, as Bent had done. That easy-chair of his uncle's—he could not have sat down in it!

But what difference did sitting or standing make? He wondered if the heavy, icy feeling he had would be anywise different if he really were turning to stone. Then he found himself repeating in a dull sort of agony,

"No. It will not be better to-morrow. No. He will not 'get over' it. No. It will not be better. The doctor thinks it will not, really. I could see that. It never does get well, a thing like that. No; to-morrow will be the same. Or worse?"

That he could not bear, and he broke out into a sudden cry. "Oh, I knew I loved him, but I did not know he was the world itself to me! It seems as if there would be nothing left. Every inch of him, body, soul, and mind, has seemed so glorious to me. No, he cannot die! There are so many people who would never be missed out of the world."

How long he stood there he never knew. He wished he need never move. He heard the orioles out in the elm-tree again. Were they going to build another nest? No, that could not be their way.

Then different things began trooping through his mind, and at last Mab's words of an hour ago. Was it only an hour?

"There's some blessed thing my Lord is working out by it that I would not miss for my life."

"Oh, I know it! I know it! And I would not miss it for mine. And I shall always have Him, best of all, whatever is taken away. I don't forget that; I didn't forget it. But I can't think everything at once. I don't know what it is;" and he passed his hand over his forehead. It seemed as if—what did the doctor say he wanted him to do?

Suddenly a sound broke through the hush of the house. It came whirring up from the driveway outside, a clear trilling little cry, half whistle

and half song, that Cyp had established as his signal when he came into the grounds.

Wynt started. Cyp was coming. He must see to him; Cyp must be told. And he would be looking for both of them. How sure his uncle had been to drop whatever he was doing and step out to the piazza when he heard that sound. He liked to see Cyp coming in.

Wynt went quickly through the rooms; Cyp was just at the piazza steps, coming up with the little swagger that he always got on when his spirits were particularly high.

"Oh, halloa!" he said. "Where's uncle? I've had the jolliest old time over at the fall. The Wilkies took me. I want to tell him about it, because, don't you remember, he said—"

"Come and tell me about it, Cyp," Wynt said, getting him into the house and over towards the sofa where his evening nap had scandalized Bent.

"Yes, but that isn't the point," persisted Cyp, with a little air. "Uncle and I had a disagreement, don't you know, about the big boulder out there. And we had hammers, Dr. Thad Wilkie and I, and we know now!"

"Do you? That's good; but you'd better take up with me, Cyp. I don't think you can tell uncle to-day. Not before to-morrow, at the best."

Cyp started, and lifting his face, shot one of

his keen, concentrated looks into Wynt's. He never hurried with them, and this one was hard to meet just now. "What is the matter with him?" he said at last suddenly. "And what is the matter with *you?*" as his eyes still measured and penetrated Wynt's face.

"He is not well," answered Wynt, commanding himself as well as he could under such fire. "We can't tell why he should not be, he was so well a little while ago. But Dr. McPherson says he must keep very quiet now. We must not go to him now unless we are called. So you had better tell me about the boulder, Cyp. We must be the best company we can for each other to-night."

Still Cyp's eyes had not stirred. He put up a hand suddenly and felt Wynt's face, as he had done the other day; then dropped the hand, and next another swift little question was struck at Wynt and almost threw him off his guard.

"I say, Wynt, will he ever get well?"

Why should Cyp ask him that? He had only said his uncle was ill and was to be left alone. "Why, of course, I hope so, Cyp. Why should he not? People almost always do. It seems strange for him, because he is always so strong and gay, but every one is ill sometimes, you know. We must try not to disturb him; that is all we can do."

Cyp put a hand on each of Wynt's shoulders,

bringing their eyes still nearer together, and pulled him with an imperative little touch. "Tell me!" he said. "You might just as well."

Wynt gave way suddenly. Somehow Cyp seemed almost as old as he at that moment. Why should they not share a little, after all?

He caught Cyp in his arms and pressed him convulsively. "Oh, Cyp! Cyp! I do n't know. How can we know? But he is too dear and glorious and young to die. And how could we ever let him go?"

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERIOUS WORDS.

BUT the next day brought very little change, and the next dragged along in the same slow, dreary way. Dreary outside of the judge's room, but inside, in spite of the silence and the helpless lying still, no one could help feeling that the judge was only waiting quietly a few days till this thing should pass off. He had Wynt or Cyp up every few hours, and always wrote a few words cheerfully, Cyp watching the process with eyes turning swiftly between his uncle's hand and his face as he wrote. What was it all? What could it all mean? He could see no change anywhere except in that poor left hand, and that was almost always out of sight.

Outside telegrams had been flying and messages coming in from every direction. The doctor kept away all offers of coming of friends; he would rather keep his patient just as he was, with a strong man nurse and otherwise only household faces about him. As for Vivian, two weeks would scarcely bring her, but telegrams were sent her daily, following her movements as closely as possible until she should take her steamer direct for home.

Bent was kept busy warding off inquirers from the door, or rather opening it noiselessly to meet them before they could be heard. The Wilkies got Cyp off when they could, but he would not leave Wynt without coaxing and pretext. To Wynt the days were heaviest.

"I guess I'm finding out how it seems to Mab to sit alone and bear things," he said at last, and he sprang up and, hardly knowing that he did so, made his way down to her window.

She was there, and saw him long before he reached it. Indeed, something made him feel she had been watching for him.

"Oh, I know! I know just how it must be, Mr. Wynt—so long and slow the hours are moving by. But don't let yourself feel that you're left to it all *alone!* You never are, Mr. Wynt, never. I found that out long ago, and you don't know how you can live on it if you once feel sure. There's One your heart can talk to all the time. And He hears so much quicker and more than any one else. And he says so many things back. Don't you know it, Mr. Wynt?"

"Yes, Mab, I should have gone wild if I hadn't. But even He used to feel that he wanted to see a friend about sometimes, you know."

"Indeed He did, and I know it all for you, Mr. Wynt. Do you think it will be long till Miss Vivian can get across?"

Wynt smiled a little bitterly to himself at this

suggestion of help and comfort, though he answered Mab quietly about the time.

Vivian! She would come in sweet and charming and graceful and bring her strange beauty with her, but— He could not define to himself the feelings that rose in confusion at even the sound of her name. Had she made his uncle happy when she was at home last? Would she want to find him and Cyp there when she came?

At the same moment Dr. McPherson was talking with Mr. Wilkie, to whom he spoke confidentially, as to no one else, about the judge. "The only real hope I feel in the case is," he said, "the quiet expectation of the judge himself. Strange, too, very, for he knows enough about such things. He seems to have no other thought but of being all right again soon; has not had, at least, until to-day. I suppose the thought of some possibility must have entered his mind, for he had a slightly troubled look at one time and wrote me that he wished to make a change in his will. I put him off, for I did n't dare risk it, and I wanted to see you first. If I knew those boys were provided for, I'd never let him make the effort for any minor point. If they're not, I declare I believe I'd run the chance. I thought perhaps you would know, Wilkie."

"They are. They must be, at least, for he spoke of it to me, positively, not two months ago. It seemed something very much on his mind.

He even showed me the very place where his will was to be found; it is lying in his safe to-day, I do n't doubt."

"Then I think I'll see what to-morrow brings. If he should seem a little stronger— But I do n't know. If he could dictate it would be a different thing, but this writing business, in his state; it 's too great a strain."

The next morning Dr. McPherson did not make his visit quite as early as before. An imperative call in another direction delayed him, and an hour later than his previous time of coming he had not appeared.

Wynt was standing at the library window, half vacantly, half impatiently watching for him. He had a dreary feeling that the doctor could not do any good up stairs, and yet he clung to him as the only hope; and down stairs it was such a break in the day, such a big, cheery help, to have him come in. It always seemed, at least, as if everything was lifted along.

He started as he heard his name spoken behind him. Was that Bent? How strange his voice sounded!

He turned and looked at him. "What is it, Bent?"

"Would you please come up stairs, Mr. Wynt?"

What could make Bent look so? "Is he worse?" he asked, leaving the window hastily.

"Barbie said it seemed as if a sudden worry seized him, as if he was terrified at something, and he called for you."

Wynt was out of the door almost before Bent had ceased speaking, and in another instant was at the threshold of the sick-room.

His uncle's eyes met him. They had been fixed on the door with an expression of eager haste which only intensified as he saw Wynt.

Wynt stepped instantly to him. "What is it, dear uncle? What can I do for you?" And he held the writing-tablet to the judge's hand.

He wrote hurriedly, but with an effort that Wynt had not noticed before. Only a few words, and then the pencil seemed to hesitate. He turned his eyes to Wynt appealingly, as if he almost thought he might do it for him. Then he made a renewed effort, there were two or three more words, and then—

Wynt never could remember what came then. He knew that beside Barbie and the nurse Bent was suddenly there, and in a moment more the doctor had come; that the doctor put his ear to his uncle's heart and said, "Yes," and then turned to Wynt and grasped his hand tightly. "My boy, he is gone!" he said.

And then somehow, Wynt never remembered how, the doctor had got over the stairs with him and they were in the library together.

He remembered that the doctor had turned

away from him for an instant, as if he could not speak. He and Judge Havisham had been close friends from boyhood. Wynt knew that very well.

"Wynt, my man," he said, "this is hard for all of us. The finest fellow this old town ever saw, by a hundred fold! But what will *you* do? How are *you* going to hold up?"

Wynt looked at him. "I?" he repeated mechanically. "Oh, I shall have to hold *on*—hold on the tighter the harder things pull."

But the next moment he caught himself again. What was he thinking of, bringing Cyp's little saying up just now? How was the doctor to understand?

"I don't know, doctor," he went on hastily. "You wont expect me to know just yet. I'm glad you think he was fine. You knew him better than most people. But no one can ever know him as we did, Cyp and I. Poor little Cyp!"

"Where is he?" asked the doctor.

"I don't know. I must look for him." And then suddenly he gave way. He had been looking steadily at the doctor, with the quiet natural to his dark face intensified; but he threw himself down now, with his head buried in his arms, upon his uncle's table, with a moan that went to the doctor's heart.

"See here, Wynt," he said after a moment,

"what are we going to do? I can't leave you two here alone. Will you come to my house? or whom will you let me send to you?"

Wynt raised his head quickly. "Oh, no one. No one, please. And, you are very kind, but we could not go away from here. He always wanted us here, you know. We must stay with him. That is to say," with a little shudder and then a thought of Vivian, "as long as we can. Where we shall go then I don't know; but I must fight Cyp's way in the world for him somewhere."

"You'll not have that to do, I trust. You will find your uncle has taken care of that, I think."

"I don't know," answered Wynt wearily. He could not seem to think of things any more, just now; and he had never thought of that.

But the doctor's words reminded him, he did not know how, of the bit of paper he held crumpled in his hand. He had caught it from under his uncle's, without an instant to read it, just as that dreadful confusion came, and he did not even know he had been holding it all this time. He looked down at it now, and the doctor's eyes followed his.

"What have you there?" he asked.

"He sent for me, he wanted to speak to me, just before you came. This is it. I did not know it was here."

He opened it and they read it together.

"I do not wish my last will carried out. I revoke—" then came the gap the hesitation had made, and then, uncertainly written, "promise to," and that was all.

"Oh, that was what he wanted! That was what troubled him!" exclaimed Wynt. "Bent said he had a frightened look, but I knew he had nothing to fear. Do you think—"

"Yes, Wynt, I do. He had wished strongly to do something of this kind, I know, but had thought he would recover. I think he suddenly became conscious that he should not, and was terrified lest it was too late."

"Oh, I am so glad, so thankful! It would have been so dreadful to do anything as he did not wish."

The doctor looked at him a moment silently. "But, Wynt, there is no signature to this. And it specifies nothing. It would not hold in law."

Wynt sprang up excitedly. "But it would hold in right! It would hold in honor! Who has a right to do what he told me with his last breath he did not wish done?"

The doctor rose to go. "Very well, Wynt. Ask Mr. Wilkie about it. He will be able to advise. Keep it carefully till you see him. That will be very soon, I don't doubt."

"The boy doesn't know what he is talking about," he said to himself, as he drove away. "That 'last will,' as I understand, provides

handsomely for him and Cyp. Knock it away, and where are they? I'm sorry the judge got as far as that, since he got no farther, and sorry the boy happens to have hold of it. He talks as if he would make fight for it. There's not one in ten thousand that would, after the truth is known; but I'm not sure about him. He's got a deal of stuff in his make-up."

Meantime Wynt was pressing the paper in question passionately against his brown cheek. "'Keep it carefully,' the doctor said! Oh, uncle! uncle! how little any one knows how I love you!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE "LAST WILL."

THE next two days went by as such days always must—the same hush in the house, the same shaded rooms, the same heavy passing of the hours, the same slow, bitter realizing of what could not seem true at first.

Cyp's first wild little agony of grief had been pitiful to see; he could scarcely be got away from Wynt, and clung to him sometimes with an actual grasp, as if he would never let him go.

"Oh, what can we do? What can we do? Wynt, what can we do?" was one of his cries as he followed him across the room the next day. Wynt could hardly move that he was not close at his side.

Wynt turned and got his arms round him again. "I don't know what we can do, Cyp, except to 'hold on,'" he said.

"But what is there left to hold on to? I didn't think he would leave us. I know he meant to stick by us. He told me once he did."

"We can hold on to the right, Cyp, and to the good and the true. We can always find those to 'stick by.' And we can—"

He hesitated a moment, and his thoughts

flashed again to that "climate" which Judge Havisham had so detested, feeling that his one half-worshipped sister had faded away under its power. To Wynt every memory of it was luxurious, with its warmth, its languor, and its flowers, but, above all, his mother's invalid room, exquisite and wonderful as it seemed to him. All the rest of the life seemed to be shaped outward from that; and one of the most vivid parts of it was the teaching, as real as the fruits and flowers, that it was all with and to and from the most loved Master, who was never far away.

Cyp was so much younger, but he was given his share in it, as well as could be, too; yet never when they were together. These things were always for some choice moment with her when no one else was by. And it was not his uncle's way to speak of them, and so, beyond hearing Cyp say his prayers— But what if it did seem strange? Why should n't he talk to Cyp about their Lord, the one only love they had to fasten to now?

So he went on quickly. "And we can hold on to our Elder Brother, Cyp, our own Lord Christ. You know how close he used to hold sorrowful people when he was here, and it 's just the same now. We need n't trouble ourselves about everything we do n't see. He knows all about it, and it 's all right."

Cyp was silent a moment, and then broke out

vehemently, "I should n't think we did 'see.' I can't understand anything, and it seems as if there was nothing left."

"There 's a whole life left, Cyp. Did you 'understand' everything when we got on board the ship because uncle sent for us to come here? We had never seen him and had no idea what we were coming to, and we thought we were leaving everything behind. But *he* knew. He had made his plans, and all the tossing about we had, that stormy time at sea, was just bringing us to him and the happy times he had ready for us."

Cyp was silent again.

"But now," he said at last, drawing himself together with a convulsive little pull.

"But now we have lost him," finished Wynt. "But we can never lose our Christ. He is the Shepherd, you know, that never leaves us. Do n't you think it would have hurt uncle if we had been afraid when he was planning for us? We must n't hurt our Lord."

"But—but we loved him so! I say, Wynt, I say, we loved him so!"

"I know we did. It 's bitter, bitter, Cyp. But we must love our Christ all the more, for comfort. We must hold on tighter yet. Now I am going into the study to look for some papers Mr. Wilkie wants me to find. He is well enough to work again, you know, and there is something uncle had not finished, and the people can't wait.

Come along with me, and then we'll find Waite and send the papers off. I'm afraid Mr. Wilkie will think I have been slow."

Mr. Wilkie was not thinking of the papers at all. He was talking with Dr. McPherson again.

"I'm glad those people are coming this noon," he said. "Lewyn Havisham, the judge's nephew, you know, and his wife, and two or three more. I'm most glad of Mrs. Lewyn. They need some woman about; needed one enough when the judge was alive. I hope she'll stay till Mrs. Adriance gets here. I'll make her if I can. That Wynt's a strange fellow, though. I tried to get them down here last night—it's all wrong for them to be there alone, of course—but I could n't make him budge. Then I tried to stay there; but he said they had Barbara and Bent and they were all right, and I really thought the boy would rather be left as he was. I stayed as late as I could and came off."

"Did he say anything to you about a paper he has?"

"A paper? No. What is it? Do you know?"

"Something the judge put his last strength into to write. A few words about his will."

"His will!" And Mr. Wilkie started with surprise and interest.

"Yes. He wished some change made, it seems. As I told you, he had intimated as much

to me the day before. I am almost sorry now—But no. He could not have done it. It would not have answered to let him try."

"But this paper. Was the change specified? Was there a signature?"

"He 'did not wish his last will carried out,' if that is specifying a change. But there was no signature. He did not even succeed in finishing what he had to say."

"His last will? That must be the one, of course, that he was talking of to me the other day, the one providing for the boys. It's not possible he thought of throwing them over at the last."

"I should not think so. Not if he was himself, certainly. But in those cases the mind is—well, you're very uncertain about it at least. Wynt will keep quiet about it, however, for a day or two, till—till such matters ought to come up; and I've told him you would consult with him then."

"When all is over, of course. I tell you, McPherson, the town never saw such a funeral as that will be. Every man, woman, and child, pretty nearly, will be on those grounds, if they can't get into the house. There's not a soul that didn't love him, and precious few that he had not done some kindness to."

And so it proved. Wynt and Cyp saw nothing, knew nothing of it, except a confused sense

of many people as they went to their carriage; and as they returned to it they had an instant's glimpse of a long line stretching away. But the very grass of the lawn looked trampled the next day, from the many feet that had stood there, pressing as close to the house as they could come.

And the next day came what was almost harder yet: the vague desolate feeling that things must go on somehow, and the strain of seeming to keep up, with all the time that feeling that it was only a seeming, as if they were only acting a part.

Mrs. Lewyn carried out Mr. Wilkie's hope, and quietly established herself, without even asking a yea or a nay.

"I simply shall not leave those boys till Vivian comes in at the door," she said in her straightforward way. "It's not the thing to be done. I sha' n't worry them. I'll leave them to themselves whenever it is best, but they 're not to be here alone, poor souls."

And even Wynt and Cyp, though they would have been in great trouble if she had asked how they would like it, found that they did like it very much. She was a comfortable, motherly little body, not so very much older than Vivian; of course not with her beauty, but pretty for all that; and she went fluttering about in a way that made things seem cheerful wherever she came in.

She got the windows open, books strewed about, and the flowers on the dining-table again. She stole Cyp off for drives, and got down Vivian's old easel and went to work upon one bit of painting after another, which fascinated Cyp and kept him watching her for hours at a time.

And Wynt found, too, that the corner where she kept her "dabbling," as she called it, was the pleasantest one where he could take his book. He was reading, after a fashion, it is true, but it was pleasant to watch the colors going in, if only as he turned the pages, and to lend half an ear to Mrs. Lewyn's bright little flutter of talk and Cyp's eager criticisms and comments upon her work.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE BEGUN.

BUT that paper, with those last few words upon it, Wynt found constantly in his mind. What could the doctor have meant by the hesitation he seemed to show? Certainly the words were plain enough. Would any one dare go against them because they were so hurried, with that last little bit of strength? He would speak to Mr. Wilkie. That was, of course, the thing to do; he would have known that without Dr. McPherson's help.

Mr. Wilkie did not keep him waiting for the opportunity long. He brought his buggy and insisted on Wynt's driving him a little way. He talked on indifferent subjects for a time, and Wynt hesitated. Would Mr. Wilkie think he was pressing the matter forward in undue haste if he spoke of it now?

But Mr. Wilkie in another moment had quietly opened the subject himself. "Wynt," he said, "McPherson tells me that your uncle's last words were spoken—or written—to you. You must take great satisfaction in that fact. And almost the last words he spoke to me in the office, before I

was ill, were about you, you and Cyp. His heart seemed very much set upon you and upon your welfare in the future. Now as to this paper that the doctor tells me of. Does it refer to any of his affairs? Is it anything you are willing to show to me?"

"More than willing. I have been wishing to show it to you all this time."

"Have you it with you?"

"No; but I can repeat it to you, word for word." And he did so.

Mr. Wilkie listened attentively and with a face from which Wynt could make nothing at all. "Ah!" he said merely, and drove on for a moment silently.

"Now, Wynt," he began, turning for an instant to fasten a curtain of the buggy and then seeming to bring his attention back again, "that will I suppose to be one of which he spoke to me not long since. It is in his safe at the office, where he once showed it me, and where I found it again on looking for it yesterday. Ordinarily it should have been opened before this time, but I feel that, if you do not object, I should like to have it wait until Mrs. Adriance returns. There seems no one else, unless Mr. Lewyn Havisham, to raise any objection, and I do not think he will."

"I?" asked Wynt in surprise. "Why should I object? It is not a thing I have anything to do with, I suppose."

Mr. Wilkie was silent a moment. "Well, probably as a minor you have not. But when we do open the will, what are we going to do? If no later one should be found, which I cannot think possible, this is the 'last will' to which your uncle referred. There it is, signed, sealed, and witnessed, as I do not doubt. Now do you think the Judge of Probate would feel that he could set this aside in consideration of these few words, unsigned and incomplete?"

"Why not?" asked Wynt, turning towards Mr. Wilkie with a show of excitement most unusual for him. "Those few words were my uncle's will, that he almost seemed to stay a moment longer to write. No one shall ever go against them if I have any power to resist."

If the judge could have stayed another moment and signed them in time for witnesses! Mr. Wilkie thought.

"The boy seems to have a good deal of fight in him," he went on to himself; "but does he know whose interest he is fighting against? The will at the office undoubtedly provides for him and for Cyp. If it were set aside, no substitute being made, Vivian, as the only direct heir, inherits everything. I'll do some hard fighting myself before I'll allow that or believe the judge meant it, either. He must have been out of his mind."

"Wynt," he began quietly, "I have my own

reasons for thinking your uncle did not make himself quite clear. He had told the doctor before that he wanted to 'make some changes' with regard to his will. Probably they were slight ones; while in his haste, and with his mind clouding rapidly, he did not express himself exactly as he would."

"His mind was as clear as mine is at this moment! If you could have seen his eyes you would know."

"Very well, Wynt. Probably you are right. But I think the matter had better rest until Mrs. Adriance's return."

"Mr. Wilkie," and Wynt was turning to him now with his own quiet look, "if it can possibly be arranged, I would rather Mrs. Adriance did not find me—Cyp and me—in the house when she returns."

It was Mr. Wilkie's turn now to start. "What do you say? What is it about not being in the house?"

"I say I would rather not. I do not think it was agreeable to her to find us there when it was my uncle's. It is hers now, I suppose."

The answer to this was a slow, long-drawn "Whew!" from Mr. Wilkie. "You are not speaking on the spur of the moment, Wynt? You must be. A mere passing idea; put it out of your head."

Wynt colored, but answered quietly, "It

would be a pretty slow 'spur,' Mr. Wilkie, that it took her two last visits to plant. And it has gone too deep now for 'putting it out.' I don't know to whom I am responsible now, but I suppose it is some one; and whoever it is, I wish he would allow me to go. I wish it were you, Mr. Wilkie. Can it not be you?"

"Since you ask me, Wynt, Judge Havisham told me he wished I would take the guardianship, though it is hardly arranged yet."

"Then I will ask you."

"And then I shall have to say no. You don't want to do anything, Wynt, that would open family secrets, by even a hint, to the eyes of the world outside. I am sorry you've got this feeling, and I hope it is a mistake. I'll have a talk with you about it soon. But whatever the fact may be, you had better put pride in your pocket a few weeks than let strangers pick up crumbs at the door. And now we have talked business enough for one day. Let us turn round here by the cascade and enjoy ourselves."

The subject was dropped instantly, but long after Mr. Wilkie reached home he found his mind recurring to it and trying to make one point or another form a clew to the real meaning of the judge's unsigned words.

"If the boy is right," he went on, "and he's got a pretty level head of his own, if he's right, and Vivian does n't want them in the house, she

does n't want them in the business anywhere, I'll take my risk. Now that 'promise' that he was trying to write about may have been a promise that he wanted made to him, or it may have meant a promise he had made some one else. That will provides for the boys. If she does n't want them provided for or does n't like the way in which it is done, she may have got a promise out of her father that he would make a change. A promise was a sacred thing with the judge. He would keep it if it took his last breath, as this almost seemed to do."

Mr. Wilkie walked back and forth in his room, sat down, tried to do some work, and then rose and walked about again.

"I'm half inclined to think I've hit it," he began once more. "It seems rather a hard conclusion for Vivian; but the truth is, I never did feel quite sure of her. There is a velvet touch that has something sharp behind it; and I do n't believe there 's much heart under that beauty of hers. Well, we 've just got to wait for her ladyship to appear. But if she undertakes to fight these boys, she 'll find she 's got me to tackle, at least."

CHAPTER XIII.

VIVIAN'S RETURN.

THE most impatiently waited for come at last, and the carriage was ordered to meet Vivian at the train before another ten days had passed. Wynt put Waite and Cyp on the front seat and got in behind them himself. His face was still and no one could have read anything but a little overstraining of his usual quiet in it, but it was only by the greatest tension of self-control that he kept his composure.

It seemed to him, at one moment, that his heart had turned to stone with the dead, dazing weight that settled there, and at the next that he should fly to the ends of the earth rather than do this thing that he had to do.

So few weeks ago, such a few short weeks, and clear as yesterday stood that day when he had driven his uncle to meet Vivian just every inch of the same ground that was to be gone over again. How radiant his uncle's face was, that handsome, manly face!

They waited a few moments for the train. Would it never come and get this thing over with?

Yes, there was the shriek of the whistle. It

was coming now, thundering in over the track. There was the drawing-room car, and there—yes, it must be—could it be—that tall figure swathed in black, could that be Vivian?

Yes, and she had recognized him. Mr. Adriance was behind her, and she was holding out her hand to Wynt with that same peculiar grace. He would have known her in India if he had seen her hold out that hand!

Then, to his amazement, she—what was she doing? She had stooped and kissed him. She had never done that to any one but Cyp before.

"My dear Wynt!" was all she said; and then Mr. Adriance gave him a quick grasp, and they got out of the crowd as hastily as possible and found Waite holding the carriage-door.

The drive to the house was alike to all of them, inasmuch as there was the same crowd of memories rushing in and the same covered effort to avoid speaking of what was uppermost in their thoughts. Beyond or beneath that one subject there was room for each to have a little wonderment that they kept instinctively to themselves; and Wynt, while asking with real interest the ordinary questions about the voyage, had time to read some changes in his cousin's face.

It was brilliant still; it could not help being that. But the vivacity was gone; it was quiet and shaded; was it really sorrowful?

The next moment he was abusing himself for

having asked the question. Certainly it was. Vivian had lost what had been everything to her from the time she had been of Cyp's age until, at least, two years ago.

But there was another look that he was sure he did not mistake. As if Vivian's home-coming were as much because of a new life to be entered upon as lest it should not look well to the world if she stayed away. And of course it must be so. As Judge Havisham's heir it must be. There was nothing for Wynt, or any one else, to criticise in that.

And just for one flash he caught a look fixed upon himself that he was sure he did not mistake. Only one flash, that betrayed for half an instant the wondering whether— and then it was gone without really finishing itself. It was not often that Vivian let her graceful external veil slip away as far as that.

"Yes, Wynt," she was saying, "we were so very glad to get in yesterday. It looked at one time as if we should not, and another day's delay would have been so very trying. We were just able to get the early train to-day. Tom dear, suppose you bring Cyp over here with us. We have more room, I am sure."

"I did not feel like driving to-day," said Wynt hurriedly, feeling that the carriage was too full with Waite; and the next moment he would have given anything if he had not said it.

But what else could he have done? It would have been worse to say he did not like to leave Cyp at home alone.

"Oh, but I want him with us," answered Vivian. "Tom, don't you think he has grown since we went away?"

Mr. Adriance, meanwhile, had been having his own thoughts about the boys. "If any one were to ask me," he said to himself, as he gave Cyp a lift and put him at Vivian's side; "if any one were to ask me, I should say these two youngsters were the best inheritance out of the whole thing. They belong to us now, I suppose."

Bent met them at the door, and Barbie stood behind. Bent's face might have been a study again, if any one had looked closely into it. The first time he had ever opened the door to receive his young mistress when "Mr. Thorpe" had not brought her in! And the first time he had ever done it with any feeling which he wished to keep out of sight!

That last visit, two months ago, had left recollections that were like thorns in the old butler's heart just now. One among them was of the troubled look on the judge's face; and another was of those few words about the "promise" that he had so unwillingly caught.

"I think two things, Mab," he had said more than once, as they sat together in the summer

twilight, sometimes silently thinking of the great grief, sometimes talking it over and over, for what relief that could bring; "I think two things; may the Lord pity us more that they're true! I think part of the trouble that has come to the old house need not have come; and I think we shall see more of it before it's all past."

But Vivian only lifted her eyes for an instant to Bent's face and to Barbie's, passing from one to the other with a kindly greeting.

"This has been very hard for you all," she said. "Are you pretty well, Bent? Barbie, are you pretty well?"

Then she turned to go into the library, but she faltered suddenly. "Wynt!" she exclaimed, turning swiftly towards him with a little gesture, "is it true? Are all the rooms quite empty? O Tom, how can I go in there?"

"Come to your own room then, will you not? It will be easier for you there, and you need rest before dinner comes on."

"No, I think— wait for me a moment, then. I must come in here first."

She stepped in and passed slowly through the room, then out to the little nook in the piazza, then back to the door of the judge's private study, drawing the curtain back a little way and glancing in.

Then she turned to her husband again. "Oh, take me away, Tom! I will go up now. These

rooms are desolate. Wynt, you wont mind if I go up a little while?"

"I must go out," said Wynt; "I promised Mr. Wilkie to let him know when you arrived. I will take Cyp down there, and be back before dinner comes in."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHO SHALL BE RIGHT?

MR. WILKIE had not recurred, as he had promised, to the question of Wynt's leaving the house.

"It will have to come up," he said to himself, "for he's a youngster that knows his own mind and is not apt to alter it. But I think I'll put him off till Mrs. Adriance gets fairly home. With this great change in circumstances, any little manner of hers that has troubled him will very likely change also. Trouble is apt to draw people together, and I hope she'll take to petting the boys and make Wynt all right again."

But he saw, the moment Wynt came in, that there was not much encouragement as yet. The quiet reserve in his manner as he spoke of "Mrs. Adriance" did not look as if much ice had been melted yet.

"So she has arrived," he said. "I am very glad of that; it is better to get things settled. Then, Wynt, I will come up to-morrow. It is late to-night, of course; I will come to-morrow morning and bring the will. Will you be kind enough to tell her that her father left some mat-

ters in my charge, and, if convenient, I will see her at that time?"

"I will tell her, certainly."

"And be there yourself, Wynt. Mrs. Lewyn, I understand, left this morning. Well, it's just as well. Now then, Wynt, as to that last paper of your uncle's; I may as well tell you frankly that, hard as it may seem, we shall not be able to regard that in settling the estate."

Wynt colored violently. "Do you mean to say that my uncle's will, his very last wish, is not to be called his will?"

"*We* will call it so, Wynt, you and I, in our hearts, but—have you a little time to spare?"

"A little, but I left Cyp with Lee Brainerd down below. I can't stay long."

"That will do. Those last words of your uncle's, then, you and I would consider sacredly if we could. But we cannot prove, to the law, that they really were his will. If accepted they would annul and set aside the will now lying in the safe, signed, sealed, and witnessed."

"Of course. That is just what he wished them to do."

"Apparently. But, unfortunately, the law cannot accept any expression of a testator's wish or will that is not signed by himself, and by a certain number of witnesses as well."

"But I know, and Barbie and the nurse know, that he wrote it."

"Do they? Could they testify upon oath that that particular piece of paper is the one they saw him write? *You* can; but can they? How do they know it is not something substituted for it?"

Wynt's eyes flashed.

"They do n't, Wynt, and they can't. They would believe you against fire and water; but they can't testify to what they only believe, and that fact the law has to recognize. Do n't you see that, in any number of cases, an unsigned paper may be presented by persons who cannot be believed? The law cannot distinguish between them and those who can. It must simply put on the strongest guard legislation can invent, and let things go at that."

"And do a bitter wrong!"

"In very rare and peculiar cases it is possible; but a general law, I suppose, must take its chance of that."

"But what has the law got to do with it?" Wynt broke out excitedly. "You say you would consider his last expression of his wishes sacred, if you could. They *are* sacred, and I will never consider them in any other way. No one can have any right to ask me to."

Mr. Wilkie was silent a moment. "Wynt," he said quietly then, "there is one more point to be considered. Suppose time to have been sufficient for your uncle to have signed that paper,

incoherent and incomplete as it was, and for witnesses, as was equally necessary, to have added their names. If any claimant were disposed to contest it, do you not see how easily it might be assumed that his mind was weakened by the approaching change, that it was incapable of acting rationally and as in health?"

"It would not be true. They might say it, but it is not true. As I told you before, you would know it if you had only been there. But I understand all you say. I see that if the will he did not wish carried out gives everything to his worst enemy or to his best friend, I cannot help it. But I will never agree to it. I loved him too much, and he trusted me too much, to do such a wrong; for a wrong is a wrong always, and always will be, whatever the law may say. And he taught me, and his whole life taught me, and my Lord's life taught me, to hate a wrong. How can you expect me to do such a thing as that?"

Mr. Wilkie met his eyes with another little inward exclamation. "Upon my word, I did n't know the boy would hold quite so hard. He 's got the Havisham stuff of two or three generations in him. I'd like to try touching him on just one point, though. I do n't believe he 'll stir, but he 'll be one out of a big host if he wont."

"I think you are hardly 'expected to do'

anything in the case, Wynt," he said quietly, but watching him keenly as he spoke. "The matter will settle itself, in spite of any objection or regret on your part or mine. And it may be better for you that it is so. To set the will aside would give Vivian everything, as she is the only direct heir. But carried out, it may make generous provision for you and Cyp."

"We would never accept it!" cried Wynt, springing up. "What do you think of us, Mr. Wilkie? If the will does make such provision, that's undoubtedly the very point he wanted changed. Else why should he have sent for me? He sent for me, you know. It was I that he tried to tell. He would have explained it if he could have gone on. But I am glad it is to be all done with to-morrow, and then I hope you wont object to our going away very soon."

"And where would you go, Wynt?"

"I don't know. It will have to be somewhere where I can go to work, as it would have been if I had never come here at all. We are not beggars. There is something belonging to us, I believe; but I know it will take work besides to keep us both. I will give Mrs. Adriance your message, Mr. Wilkie, and I must bid you good-by now."

Mr. Wilkie looked after him as he closed the door with a very unreserved little "Whew!" shaping his lips. "What am I going to do with

a boy like that?" he said. "He's going to have a fortune thrown at him, undoubtedly, and he wants to throw it back again, for an idea that he's got! If he were sure of his ground it would be different, but it's more than three-quarters surmise what the judge meant. It's worth all the fortunes in the universe, though, a moral backbone like that. I wish that boy belonged to me. I can't do anything with him, though, till I'm fully appointed guardian, and then I'll try to make him hear reason.

"It's an unlucky mess the judge got us into, though, trying to do a thing too late. Why in the name of sense didn't a man like him alter his will in time if he wanted to do it at all? It wasn't like him, not like him in the least. I don't believe he had the thing at heart, whatever it was, even if he had it in mind; and I wish I knew whom he made that promise to."

CHAPTER XV

THE RIGHT KEY.

VIVIAN was more than willing to see Mr. Wilkie, and he felt that he should be equally glad to bring matters to a conclusion, so far as his own responsibility was concerned. The business seemed a trifle awkward, somehow, taken just as things stood.

Vivian met him, however, with so much of her own peculiar manner that he was scarcely seated before he found the old fascination returning and shaming him for having had even a half suspicion that she could do anything else but charm.

"So extremely kind of you, Mr. Wilkie, to let our affairs burden you in any way," she was saying. "But it does not surprise me. So true a friend of dear papa's while he was with us would not fail us *now*, I was quite sure."

And the word "now" carried so much meaning as she spoke it, uttered hesitatingly, and yet with a half-faltering dwelling upon it when it came.

Judge Havisham's will was short, and it was soon read. It made his daughter, Vivian Havi-

sham Adriance, sole heiress of his estates, beyond certain provisions for his two nephews, Wynthrop and Cyprian DeKay Havisham, and a few minor legacies to the other relatives and to old servants of the house.

The house was to be maintained as at present, and considered as the home of the two nephews, in fair and equal share with his daughter Vivian, until the younger of the two should have completed his educational pursuits. The expenses of a college course were to be met from the estate, if such a course should be chosen by either or both in preference to a business career, and each was to receive at his majority a sum to be held in trust until that time by the guardian whom the will proceeded to appoint.

Short as it was, and occupied as Mr. Wilkie appeared to be in reading it, he found opportunity to catch some changes in Vivian's face. Through the first few paragraphs a restrained gleam of satisfaction, almost of triumph, as if something desired and aimed at had been successfully brought to pass; then, as the provision for the nephews was made specific, there was for one instant an unconscious betrayal of intense feeling of a very different kind. It was covered almost as quickly again, but neither expression had been too transient for Mr. Wilkie's well-trained eye.

"I believe I had the right key after all," he exclaimed mentally; but in another instant he

had brought his mind again to close holding of the work in hand.

That miserable paper! That, and the inevitable discussion it would bring, must come up.

Wynt knew that it must, and had stipulated that he might disappear as soon as the will was read. He had said all he had to say to Mr. Wilkie. He could not endure hearing it all over again.

"Another paper has come into my hands, Mrs. Adriance, and one which I feel it my duty to present just now, as it expresses a wish on your father's part to change, if not to annul, the will just read."

"To change it? To annul it?" exclaimed Vivian, lifting her eyes to his with a swift flash and then dropping them to the floor.

"Ah! You were expecting it," was Mr. Wilkie's reply mentally, but he went quietly on to his account of Wynt's last interview with his uncle.

Vivian's color came and went with a swiftness that showed intense effort at self-control; for once the graceful woman found it hard to keep her secrets to herself; but she looked at the lawyer with only her usual quiet earnestness at last.

"And this paper that means so much—it has no signature, you say? But it was given to dear Wynt? Poor boy, it was hard for him, but fortunate for us. We hardly need a signature, if it came through Wynt's hands direct."

Mr. Wilkie himself almost needed an instant, this time, to disguise thought. What did a speech like that mean from a woman who knew as much as Vivian did of life?

"We do not need it to satisfy our own credence, Mrs. Adriance, but unfortunately, both signature and witnesses being wanting, the will that would otherwise be set aside must stand."

Once more there was a flash in Vivian's eyes. "And you call that right? Surely your interest in my cousins, warm as it is, would not lead you to call that right, true to my father? I cannot doubt it had been his full intention to replace the will you have read by a new one. In fact he intimated such intention to me before I left. I supposed—"

"You forget, Vivian," interrupted Mr. Adriance, "that in this case Mr. Wilkie is only at liberty to consider what Judge Havisham had, or had not, legally arranged; he is speaking of nothing farther than that."

"You are quite right, Tom. I seemed to forget for the moment. Papa's poor half-expressed wish seems so dear."

"If it could be allowed to govern us," said Mr. Wilkie quietly, as he took his hat to leave, "it would simply leave everything in your hands and trust the boys to you."

Vivian hesitated. "It would have been a great satisfaction to be so trusted," she said.

"And I think it was his wish. I think he felt he had made some mistakes, especially in regard to keeping them so much at home."

"Now," said Mr. Wilkie to himself as he walked back to his office, "I think I have got pretty nearly her whole secret out of that charming Vivian. Her father 'intimated' to her, she says; 'promised,' I think she means; and that is the very promise that unlucky piece of paper tries to grapple with. She wanted everything left, 'trusted,' in her hands, and she did *not* want the boys in the house, and she got a promise from him that it should be so. That promise he had delayed fulfilling, and was trying to do it for honor's sake when too late. The fact that it was too late upsets her plans.

"Well, a woman like that is past my understanding. Why can't she give two such boys a welcome in that house? But she does n't want them there, that is plain. Wynt is right, and upon my word, I begin to feel with the fellow when he vows he wont stay. It makes me hot! A mistake to keep boys at home, indeed! If they were packed off to boarding-school, to be ruined, it would leaves the house clear for her gay visitors, of course, and they 'd be no trouble to any one."

CHAPTER XVI.

KEEPING UP THE FIGHT.

WHEN Wynt left the room he walked quietly out of the house, down the driveway, past the fish-pond, and past Mab's door, towards Barbie's, on the side of the drive.

Mab nodded to him as he passed her window. How bright and sweet her face was! It cheered him, and he gratefully answered the look it gave him. It seemed full of things it would like to say, and he could guess what some of them were. On the whole, he could n't lose them all; and he stepped back and reached a hand in at the window.

Mab met it with one of her smiles. "How brave you are looking, Mr. Wynt," she said. "I knew you would n't fail. I knew you 'd 'hold on tighter the harder things pull.' "

Wynt looked at her in surprise. "Where did you get that?" he asked.

"Oh, I heard of it roundabout from Mr. Cyp. Did you hear it too?"

"Yes, I heard it, but I did not think it had got as far as this. As to being brave, Mab, I do n't know. I feel determined to-day, if you call that brave."

"Of course I do, if you're determined on the right, and I'm sure you are."

Wynt's eyes flashed. "Yes, Mab, it *is* right. Mr. Wilkie does not think so, but he'll change his mind some day. And I can't determine on the wrong, whatever he thinks!"

Mab looked a little anxiously at him. Mr. Wilkie was a wise man, she thought.

"Well, Mr. Wynt," she said, "I'm sure you're 'holding on,' at least, or you'd never keep up as you do—not if you hadn't fast hold of the Hand that's out of sight—not when 'things pull' as they do now."

"No, I couldn't, Mab. Though sometimes it seems as though I didn't know *what* I think or feel."

"You do all the same though, Mr. Wynt," said Mab hastily, as he turned to go. "It's no wonder it seems so just now; but it wont last. You'll get the Hand in yours, plainer and plainer, and then there's such rest; when we once feel it is holding us and shaping out everything, we go over the worst places like floating; and we can't stumble or faint, least of all when we know he's marked it all out for us in love, the path leading to the very best."

She nodded again, and he felt a touch of her bright little courage going along with him as he went. "It *is* good to speak to somebody, after all," he said. "I've had no one but Cyp all the

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time; no one that's known what it all is, I mean. As for Bent, poor fellow, it seems as if he can't speak uncle's name. The only time he tried it, with me, he gave out and cried as if he were no other than Cyp."

He went over to Barbie's door. It was open and she was sitting just inside, framed by the scarlet trumpet-vine that ran over it. Her head was erect and turbaned as always, but the gay colored headkerchief was exchanged for one of spotless white, and that Wynt had never seen before, until these last two weeks, except when Communion Sunday came.

"Must always wear white, the nearer we get to heaven," she had said to Cyp, when he asked her about it one day; he was the only person who had ever dared break her stately silence as to what it meant. And now no one asked whether it were worn as mourning for "Mr. Thorpe," or whether his going had made heaven seem nearer to Barbie and more real than earth.

Her hands were busy with her knitting, and her needles flashed with a swiftness that had always seemed miraculous to the boys; but her great brilliant eyes seemed to have forgotten them and everything else that was near. They were looking out into the clear summer light and did not seem to see even what was there. They saw Wynt, though, the moment he came in sight, and Barbie rose instantly and stood.

"Yes!" she exclaimed with a little gesture as if she would have stretched out both hands to him, "I was sure the time would come. I have n't wondered that it did n't come sooner, but I knew it would come, when you 'd step into Barbie's door and say she could either comfort or help."

Wynt smiled and sprang up the door-step in his old way, half wondering at himself as he did so, and feeling that it somehow came from having stopped with Mab.

"You *can* help me, Barbie," he said as he sat down on the little porch bench. "But do n't stand there on ceremony like that; I sha' n't stay two minutes if you do; and I want to talk to you. I've needed some one to talk to, I believe."

Barbie looked at him, and it seemed as if her soul would melt in her eyes. Back flew her thoughts to the day when the house had seemed desolate because his young mother had gone out of it a bride; and now here was her boy, left to carry its name, desolate and alone!

"Some one to talk to? Yes, for even our Lord needed that. It's no way for you to be living, Mr. Wynt, and it wont last. The Lord knows too well about young hearts like yours. He says, 'Come ye apart into the wilderness,' once in a while; but he do n't keep 'em there long; just long enough, Mr. Wynt, to teach some secret or give some precious gift. Then he 'll be leading you out again richer than ever before."

"Richer, Barbie! Do you think I can be 'richer' when my uncle is gone?" And then his heart smote him for saying it as soon as the words were formed. He felt so stripped and desolate with that great, honored love gone out of his life; that was why he had said it. And yet did he not at the same time feel that something made him richer too?

A strange new strength had come to him, a feeling of uplifting, that he could not understand. It seemed to place him where everything was new, everything changed. Life seemed so different—emptied, in one sense, but also so full of meaning it had never had before, so linked in with the other one out of sight; such a short step out of one into the other; they could not be far apart.

And that was not all. How could he say he *knew* that the Elder Brother in his pity had come close to him and made His love and friendship so strangely real? And yet it *seemed* to him that he knew it.

"Yes, I say richer, Mr. Wynt. Not the way those would reckon that don't know; but *He* knows, and you'll find it out some day. He's got his plan about it all, and he don't mistake. He can fill up cups as well as empty them. And don't I long to see 'em just poured out on your head! It seems all the love I have for the whole Havisham House has got to come round to you and Mr. Cyp. How is Mr. Cyp?"

"He 's well. Has n't he been looking in here to-day?"

Barbie shook her head. "No, nor yesterday."

"I must try and shake him up. He sticks around wherever I am too much the last two weeks. Mr. Adriance will give him a stir now though. But, Barbie, I want to talk to you. Are you willing I should tell you something you must never tell?"

Barbie fixed her eyes upon him till it seemed as if they might almost save him the trouble of telling, and then smiled. "Just as much and as many as you like, Mr. Wynt. Do you think Havisham secrets can trouble me? I've carried 'em here, *full*," and she laid her graceful brown hand across her heart, "too many a year."

"Well, then, Barbie, I do n't think the house is the place any longer for Cyp and me."

Barbie looked at him slowly again and gave a stately nod. "Sometimes, Mr. Wynt, the Havishams tell me secrets that have told themselves to me before."

"Did you think that before, Bab? Then you'll be on my side. But the reasons? You cannot know those."

Barbie's eyes were still fixed quietly on his. "There 's too much Havisham blood in your veins to stay where there 's no welcome, Mr. Wynt."

Wynt started. "Oh, how could you know that? I can guess, though. You know us all so well. I wonder if Bent has found it out too. But I could do it, Barbie, and I should have to, if it were right. But it's not, more than other things they want me to do. We have read the will to-day, Barbie, a will that he made I don't know when. We were to stay there, Cyp and I, and have something given us besides—a big pile, it seems to me; I don't know whether Vivian could spare it; and the rest was hers. But he changed his mind about all that, or some of it. When you called me, you know, that is what he was trying to say. He wanted to take it back. But because he hadn't time to do it 'legally,' Barbie, they are not going to listen; they say the old way must 'stand.' It's all right for them, of course, Mr. Wilkie and the rest, but it would never be right for me. They cannot help it; I understand just how it is. But when he called me and took his last little bit of strength to tell me he wanted things changed, do you think I can go right on, as far as my part goes?"

"No, Mr. Wynt,"' said Barbie slowly, "I don't see how you can. But he did not have time to say what he did want you to do, and he surely had some good wish. Mr. Wilkie—"

"He had time to say what he did *not* want," interrupted Wynt. "How can Mr. Wilkie make wrong right? Perhaps he would have left Viv-

ian to decide. Do you think then we should have stayed in the house? Now listen, Barbie. If I go out of the house, I go to work. There is some money that they say they must keep for me till by-and-by, but I will let by-and-by take care of itself. If things look different to me when I am twenty-one, all right. If they don't, I don't see what any one but myself will have to say about it. So now, Barbie, this is what I want. Of course I can't earn much, and there's only a very little belonging to Cyp and me. So we can't go and live in state anywhere, even if we wish; and state would be pretty lonely off among strangers too. We must go where it will cost just what we can afford to pay. I have thought of such a place, just one, where I want to go. Is my thought another secret that tells itself to you?"

It had not, but it did so in an instant now. Barbie's cottage was like a bird-box from the outside; but appearances are deceitful sometimes. It was all dainty, tasteful, and neat as wax; that even the outside might suggest. But there was space in it too, and her own room being below, a really charming one had always stood vacant above. This, when the two boys arrived, Judge Havisham had fitted up suitably, and whenever there was an overflow at the house they were slipped quietly into it for a few days. A great frolic Cyp considered it always, and he counted

the arrivals eagerly, if ever a crowd seemed imminent. One more, two more, coming, and they were off to their "country seat," as Cyp had named it from the first.

"The room is all ready for you, Mr. Wynt," Barbie said.

Wynt laughed. "Oh, Barbie, there's no use in telling you anything. But that makes me all right; only, you understand, you are to take us to board. It will be a heap more trouble than letting us shy up stairs for a night."

The next thing was to see Mr. Wilkie, and Wynt ran up his stairs quickly. He must have got back to his office long ago.

Mr. Wilkie could not tell, for a moment, whether he was glad to see him come or not. "I hate to have a tussle with the boy," he said to himself; "but I may as well have it and be done."

But Wynt did not give him much choice as to delay. "Can I speak to you a moment about those things you read to us to-day?" he said. "I was not to go to college if I chose business instead?"

"No."

"And the money you hold in trust till I am twenty-one?"

"Yes."

"Then those things are disposed of. Now as to staying in the house. If the will stands, it is

to be considered as our home. That does not seem to me to insist, necessarily, upon our staying in it. People do not always stay in their houses, do they? I think Vivian has not."

Mr. Wilkie would have liked to smile, but he saw it was better not. Wynt was too serious.

"Your logic is pretty good, Wynt," he said. "You'd better come in here with me and study law."

"I don't see that there is any provision for that. I shall have to go where I can work things out for Cyp and myself. Do you object to this?"

"I think I do."

"Then, may I ask, are you yet appointed as our guardian?"

"No; I have waited till the will should be read."

"Then I shall go to the Judge of Probate and ask him to appoint some one else. If my uncle had changed his will he might have changed that part of it with the rest."

This time Mr. Wilkie gave way entirely. He threw himself back in his chair and laughed heartily. "Wynt, my boy," he said, "look out for yourself. You may get some one worse than I, by a long shot. Better stick to an old friend, and I'll do all I can for you. But if you go out, where are you going? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to work, and I'm going to the

room my uncle furnished for us in the cottage by the gate. Barbie will look out for us there."

Mr. Wilkie gave a long slow whistle. "See here, Wynt. As nearly as we can guess at it, your uncle's last wish was to put everything into Vivian's hands, trusting her to provide for you. With your view of things, why don't you let her do it? Why do you want to go to work?"

"Do you suppose she would do it, when you take away from the estate all that money you are going to keep for us?"

Mr. Wilkie could not help smiling again. "I'll make a special pleader of you yet, Wynt," he said. "But take yourself off now, and give me a little time to sum up. Don't go to the Judge of Probate and repudiate me for a day or so, and I'll make up my mind. Remember, as I told you, haste does not look well in these things. You will not suffer by waiting that length of time. And some one has got to settle the matter with Vivian, recollect. You'd better be thinking what you'll say to her."

When Wynt had gone Mr. Wilkie tried to give his attention to other matters; but it seemed difficult, and he pushed his papers away at last and began to pace the office with rather a quick step.

"Upon my word," he thought, "the judge has put me in an awkward sort of place. I don't know what to do with the boy. If it were a

mere stickling about a question of 'right' that his conscience seems to have taken up, I should tell him that the only 'right' for him at present was to yield to his guardian till he should become of age.

"But that does n't seem to be the whole of it. If I keep him there, I 'm afraid it will be torture to a high-spirited fellow like him. Things would n't be very pleasant; they could n't be. And if Vivian just turned about and took herself off nine-tenths of the year, as very likely she would, what kind of a way would that be for two boys to live?

"I declare I don't see why, in the name of common sense, the boy has n't got about the right of it. I 'd rather he 'd study, but he can't do that unless he carries out the whole thing. And he can't go off to college and leave Cyp there. It 's about as broad as it is long, every way. I do n't wonder the judge wanted to alter that will.

"There 's this about it; it never hurts a boy to go to work. Perhaps if I let him try it a year or two things will work themselves round into better shape. Barbie's is the safest place for the youngsters, if they go out at all; and if Vivian does not like the looks of a Havisham living at the street gate, why, I wont say I should n't enjoy that."

CHAPTER XVII.

IS THERE A CHANCE?

WYNT went down stairs and stopped before Brainerd and Gray's, glancing in as well as he could through the closed door. Was Lee there? he wondered. He wished he could catch him at liberty a little while. He had seen him but once during the last two weeks and more, and then Lee had been so sobered by the shock of what had happened, and so full of sympathy that he wished he had courage to express, that Wynt did not get much idea of how Lee was going on himself.

But he could not forget the last day he saw him in the store. The thought of it had hung about him and worried him, even through the bitterness and perplexities of his own days.

"Lee must have got over all that miserable nonsense by this time," he thought. "There's too much stuff in him." But he could not quite persuade himself and felt anxious still.

Yes, Lee was in sight, near the farther end of the store, and seemed to have no customer in hand. He was apparently putting things in order after some sales, but it looked more like pushing and kicking things about to Wynt.

Wynt opened the door and went in. Lee did not see him until he had come quite near. Then he started, and his face flushed with first a quick look of welcome and then one of embarrassment that almost covered the other.

He was so glad to see Wynt! But what was he to say to him? It seemed to him no one had ever had such a terrible grief as Wynt's. He had stammered out a few words about it when they met last. Was it time now to speak of it or time to let it alone?

If Wynt read the look, however, he ignored it, and Lee found himself deciding suddenly on the "letting alone."

"How are you, old fellow?" Wynt was saying. "I got sight of you through the door, and I thought it would do me good to look in. Can't you come off for a walk?"

"Could n't do it," said Lee. "That one I had with you the other day was extra luck. I 'm the only salesman in for half an hour, and I have all this plaguey lot of carpets to roll up. There 's no hurry about them, though;" and Wynt caught a peculiar look, as Lee gave one of them a push with his foot; "I do n't interest myself greatly in them this particular time, and there 'll be nobody in. The day has been dead dull all the way through, and it generally finishes as it begins. Come, let 's find a seat."

"All right, if you say so. But I 'd like just

as well to see the carpets rolled up. Or I believe I'd like to lend a hand myself. Can't you let me try? I'd like to see why it is not 'interesting' work."

Lee's face blazed, but he controlled himself. "Wynt is n't the fellow to fire your own troubles at just now," he thought; but he made an involuntary little gesture to put Wynt aside. "You do n't touch them!" he said. "Come; here 's a seat."

They moved off and chatted a few moments about indifferent things. Lee's face cleared a good deal, but Wynt, watching it by glances, did not feel satisfied.

"There 's something gone that used to be there, and something there that I do n't like, though I can't tell what it is. What 's got hold of the fellow that he can't work over by this time?"

"Now, Lee," he said at last, fixing his eyes on him with his old quiet look, "tell me what 's the matter with those carpets over there."

The "something" that Wynt did not like darkened suddenly in Lee's face; but he turned it full upon Wynt.

"See here," he said, "I think I mentioned to you what a pleasant sort of master Warnock here is to take orders from. Not that you know what it is to take orders from anybody, but how do you suppose I like this? It 's been a dull day,

as I told you; not a thing to do, as will happen once in a while. I could see it troubled him greatly that I was n't breaking my back, but he found enough to keep me out of mischief, making up errands and all that, till an hour ago. I was tired by that time, and glad of the chance to look out of the window five minutes or so. But there happened to be a mirror pretty near it—you see it over there—and I got a view of Warnock that he thought was behind my back. He slipped into the carpet section and gave one roll after another a push with his foot and sent them flying. Then he stirred them up a little, enough to look as if a customer had had them while I was out, and then he called me: 'Brainerd! come and roll these carpets up;' and he sauntered off with that horrid smile of his and got his newspaper. He 's over there pretending to read it yet."

Wynt was on the point of laughing, for the story had its droll side certainly; but he knew it would not do. "That *was* a 'hard grind,' Lee," he said; "but could n't you pay him in his own coin? Could n't you smile back again at him and let the thing laugh off?"

"No, I could n't," answered Lee fiercely; "unless I gave him a smile like his own, with ugliness enough in it to get me knocked over for insulting superiors. And you could n't, either. You 've got too much soul in you to knuckle to such things. Still," he added, with a bitter tone

in his laugh, "I don't bother myself about it much. It can't last a great while, and I make it up evenings while it goes."

"Lee!" exclaimed Wynt, "what *do* you mean? You've got off that kind of talk before; I'd like to know what there is in it. I'll go out with you to-night, if you'll tell me where you go."

Lee laughed again. "You! You'd be out of your little rut with the fellows that amuse me."

"Then you're out of *your* little rut with them. You're just as much of a man and a gentleman as I am, if you wont pretend to spoil yourself. We haven't hooked arms together two years without knowing what each other is made of; and we shouldn't have done it to begin with if we hadn't been of the same stuff."

"You're too good-natured, Wynt. But, you see, we happened to strike apart, unluckily, after a while. I came in here and you didn't. That's where it is."

"Well, why don't you 'hold on tighter,' then, 'the harder things pull'? Do you suppose a fellow doesn't get pulls wherever he is?"

Lee hesitated. Wynt had been getting terrible ones, certainly, and how he was "holding on"! But a frown gathered in spite of himself. "You never tried it here," he repeated, with his face half turned away. "I wish you would."

The words struck Wynt with a sudden force. "I will," he answered quickly; "that is to say, if I can."

Lee was looking at him squarely enough now. "Yes," he answered after a moment, in a sarcastic tone, "I should like an 'if' like that in my way."

"Would you? I think I'll try to fight them out of mine; for there are two of them, now that I recollect."

"And what may they happen to be?" asked Lee, still with a skeptical tone.

"If I can get in—perhaps Brainerd and Gray don't want me—and if my guardian will say yes."

Lee seemed to be struck dumb. "I wish you would tell me what *you* mean," he exclaimed at last. "Are you 'off your base' to-day?"

"I don't think so," laughed Wynt. "I was never more serious, at least. I'm going to work somewhere for Cyp and myself, and I'd like to come along with you. Is there any chance before too long, do you think? Is any one likely to abdicate that might resign to me?"

Lee's eye seemed to run over Wynt from head to foot. Wynt Havisham? The same as a son, every one had supposed, to Judge Havisham and the Havisham House! But still, gentlemen's sons went into business often enough; perhaps fellows with fortunes might too.

"There 's the assistant book-keeper," he began in a confused kind of way. If this was a joke he could n't see it, that was all.

"Is that what you 're taking my measure for?" laughed Wynt; but he went on eagerly: "Book-keeper, did you say? assistant? I could do that, I 'm sure; and I should n't need to be ponied up, as I should on goods. I suppose so, at least. What does he have to do?"

"Just the drudgery, that 's all. He 's just gone off; a year older than you. Bills to make out, copying, and all that. It 's not much, and so Warnock calls him out when he likes and fills up the time—errands and disagreeable odd jobs, you know. A fine chance, is n't it, for a fellow with a fortune and servants, like you?"

"If there 's any fortune for me," answered Wynt lightly, "it does n't trouble me just now. And it 's either fortune or work, you know; so I take the work. Do you think there 's a chance, really, for this?"

Lee's face brightened. To get Wynt into the store with him! A different life it would be.

"Of course there is," he exclaimed eagerly. "We 'll strike for it in a hurry, and they 'll jump at you; that is to say, if you 're sure," and his face fell again. Wynt Havisham trapped in the old mill! No, he 'd have nothing to do with it. Much as he needed Wynt's preaching, he was n't mean enough for that.

"No, I'm not sure; there's the fact," answered Wynt without waiting for him; "but I will be as soon as I can see Mr. Wilkie again. Can you keep the berth open a day or two, do you think?"

"Yes, I can do that well enough. But, Wynt, I say, old fellow," and Lee gave up and held out a hand—"I say," and he gave Wynt's a grip, "I should think life was worth having if I got you in here with me."

"Of course it is. But I've kept you too long. If I get you into a scrape with those carpets it will be black ball for me. So good-by."

As he passed out he met Jem, handsome as ever, with his large, manly physique, light hair, and curling yellow beard. But he got the same feeling that he had in being with Lee. The frank, bright expression was gone, and there was a clouded, almost lowering, look that did not seem like Jem.

"What's the matter with everybody here?" he thought. "I should n't like to think Lee was right about the store being too much for a fellow's ballast, if I'm to try it myself."

Jem touched his hat as they met; he could not well help doing that; but he gave him no farther recognition beyond barely raising his eyes. He dropped them again instantly, however, and stood silent to let him pass.

Wynt glanced at him curiously, and then stood

still also. "Halloa! how are you, Jem? Aren't you going to speak to me, as good friends as we were when you worked on the place?" and he held out his hand.

Jem took it awkwardly; his face brightened, and a look of sympathy came into it too. No one spoke to Wynt in these days without that.

"Where do you keep yourself, Sundays and all? I never see you on the grounds lately. I suppose you're at the cottage often enough evenings, though."

Jem darkened instantly. "I'm not at the cottage evenings nor other times any more," he said stolidly.

"Not at the cottage? Why, what are you talking about? Mab never steps out of it, certainly."

"I don't look for Mab here nor there," he said. "She's throwed me over, and she can go where she likes."

"Now, Jem Dent, you needn't tell me that. Do you think I don't know what Mab is as well as you? Come along," and he caught Jem by the buttonhole and pulled him round the corner of the store a little out of the way; "come along and tell me what you did to Mab first."

Jem hesitated a moment and then met Wynt's eyes fair and square, as if he were glad to free his mind at last. "I asked her to say if she would do as other girls do when they've promised—if

she'd marry me and leave putting me off, for I was tired of it."

"And what did she say?"

"She said she'd not do it with things as they were, and she saw no prospect of change."

"And what then? You don't call that 'throwing you over,' I suppose?"

"She said she'd have no one about that was tired of it, and I was to go."

"And you went?"

Jem looked wonderingly at him. "What could I do but go?"

"What could you do? Why, stick to her, man. Get down and beg her pardon first, and then stick. What's there such a hurry about? There's a whole life ahead of you yet. Mab will get well some day; or if she ever finds out she'll not, why should n't you be friends at least? I'm ashamed of you, Jem. There is n't a girl in the country like her, nor one that's got a harder lot. What do you want to go piling more on top of it for?"

Jem looked down half sullenly, but something evidently pleased him at the same time. "I do n't see that I 'm piling anything on," he said.

"You do n't? You think it's nothing to Mab to lose what she cares most for out of a life like hers?"

Jem stood up squarely again. "If I'd thought she cared for it! That's what I could n't see."

"Then you don't deserve to see it. Why, I could see it myself. When was this? About two—no, more than three months ago. I remember it. Mab was as white as a swan for a while, with a still look in her face that she always used to have when the pain was the worst; but she stuck to it that she was no worse. And you've made yourself miserable. I saw that too a month ago. Come, brace up, Jem. Knock yourself into shape again and behave like a man."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH THE WILL?

WHEN Wynt left Barbie she sat a few moments motionless, her hands in her lap and her eyes looking far out into the distance again. The red trumpet-vine blossoms, the lacing branches of the trees beyond, the blue sky—they might as well not have been there.

"Just what I was saying to little Mab not two months gone by," she said, bowing the white head-handkerchief as she nodded to herself. "I said some of the hardest troubles that ever the old house saw came of some one not 'holding on,' somewhere, to the right and the true. They're all by themselves, the Havishams, all by themselves; an' strange—*I* call it strange—to see them, the noblest and the best, an' their souls standing highest of all the families the Lord can look on for many a mile around, an' then suddenly, somewhere in a generation, some one will just let go! But I never believed it could come of Mr. Thorpe. An' I can't believe it now; not if he was found in his right mind. But if it's true he let Miss Vivian persuade him against the rights of Mr. Wynt and Mr. Cyp, he just *has* let go, that's all, right mind or wrong!"

Barbie gave a little moan, and the head-handkerchief swayed again.

"It's bitterer than to see him die," she said. "We can love him if he stays or goes, but we can't pride him if he didn't hold to the right. That leaves a stain on high or low, whoever it may be. An' I loved him too well to see that. A high, pure life like his, an' a stain coming at the very last! An' if his old Barbie could wash it with tears an' wipe it with the hairs of her head, it could do no good." And she swayed herself mournfully to and fro.

Suddenly she raised her head, and held it proudly again. "Mr. Thorpe was *not* clear in his mind, let who will say contrary!" she exclaimed with vehemence. "Don't let any one bring up that he was, to me! Not at that last poor little minute, at least. And if wrong is done, the Lord can turn it away like a river, before a wave can even kiss the feet of those boys, and build up something better for them than it takes away. Barbie Havisham needn't trouble herself about business that belongs to Him. Time enough to look on at what he's pleased to do and to pride in it when he has it done."

She took up her knitting again, and her thoughts came back to what was close at hand. She would go to Mab and take her some trumpet-blossoms. The day was too fine for sitting

inside. She liked to feel the air round her and the ground under her feet.

As she moved slowly along, making the most of it, she glanced towards the Havisham House. It was half hidden by the trees, but the corner where Vivian's room lay was open and free. Barbie always watched that corner; its shaded windows gave it a deserted look while Vivian was away, but were flung gayly open, luxuriating in sunlight, as soon as she returned.

They were not so this morning, however. Barbie could just see that the room must be occupied, and that was all.

"Poor Miss Vivian!" she thought. "It's a sad day for her when she does n't want the sunlight pouring everywhere."

Barbie was right, but there were other feelings mingled with sadness, this morning, that made quiet rooms more in harmony with Vivian's frame. She had withdrawn into the one Barbie had noticed as soon as Mr. Wilkie left, and even Mr. Adriance hesitated as to whether it were best to follow her there.

He delayed a little while, and then tapped at the door. Vivian was pacing the floor, her eyes brilliant and her right hand playing nervously with a jewel upon her left.

"Tom!" she said hastily, "I ought never to have gone away until I had seen papa's promise carried out."

"Promise?" asked Mr. Adriance, settling into an arm-chair and speaking in his easy, good-natured way. "I did not know he made you one. What did you want him to do?"

Vivian hesitated. There were some surfaces beneath which she did not care to let even her husband penetrate, and this one would have held its secret with the others if to-day's strain had come less suddenly. She was excited and she was perplexed. She would tell him what she chose. Otherwise he need not have known that she did not care to have the boys in the family. It would n't have been of consequence, of course.

"I wanted him to do what he tried to do with his last strength, cancel that foolish will and leave everything in my hands. Papa must have been bereft when he made it! carried along with that sentimental way of his."

"Why, what's the matter with the will?" asked Tom, crossing a foot over his knee. "I do n't see why it is n't well enough."

Vivian stopped in her walk and leaned back in an easy-chair of her own. Her black dress and flushed face contrasted against the blue velvet of the chair and one white wrist drooped gracefully over its arm. Was it of any use to talk to Tom, after all, about such things?

"The will is folly, Tom. There is no reason, because papa loved a sister once, that her boys should overrun and occupy our house. They

should be taken care of somewhere, of course, if that is necessary; but I think they have provision of their own sufficient for reasonable wants. By this will the establishment is to be maintained—I am to maintain it, I suppose—as their home."

"No more than yours," interposed Tom.

"More than mine, as it would take mine away from me. I do not wish it with an incumbrance of that kind. Have you not had perception enough to understand that, you dear stupid Tom? What do you suppose kept me away from it, from dear papa, so much the last two precious years of his life?"

Tom uttered a prolonged murmur, which grew more emphatic as it progressed. "Never once dreamed of it, Vivian! Why, now, it seems to me the best plum in the whole inheritance, having two youngsters like those to brighten up a place. You don't get a chance to watch a fellow like that Wynt grow up every day, you may be sure."

"And why should I wish to see him grow up? It certainly is not among pleasures that I should seek. If papa—poor dear papa—fancied he wished it, it was a delicate matter for me to approach, of course; and I could not wish him to give up his pleasure to make room for mine. But he came to see it differently. He saw how unsuitable a place it was for them, especially when I

wished to bring my own guests. A well-chosen school is far better. I convinced him of that."

Tom was silent a few moments. There were times when his felt that his own sentiments were as well kept to himself. "Well, I do n't see but you have got them, at any rate, as things stand. And they 'll have to stand—the will, I mean. There 's no getting round that."

A slightly scornful look curved Vivian's lips. "We will not try to 'get round' it, Tom, but we can contest it. It is not right. It is a wrong to dear papa. A hastily made, inconsiderate will, a piece of folly destroying so much happiness, and regretted and withdrawn by himself. And the amount left in trust! You can see, Tom, he must have felt that a great mistake. Why should the Havisham estate be shredded and scattered about? I have heard papa say often that there was too much of that done. If there is any way to right things and follow what was his true last will, I am determined on it. If there is not, I have no home here any longer. We will go abroad again."

Tom rose and took his turn at walking about.

"Now, Vivian," he said at last, "let me give you one piece of advice. Every one in this town knows what the judge's ways were, and every one knows those boys. They 're favorites, as they deserve to be, and they have sympathy everywhere. And every one will know what

that will is and that it provides handsomely for them. I suppose you would do the same, if you could change it, but people are not going to look at it in that light. So turn your back on the house and go elsewhere if you don't fancy staying in it as it is, but don't undertake to meddle with the will. You'd make a mighty poor piece of work with it; there's nothing to go on, and every one would have their opinion about it, what is worse."

"And do you think I have no friends? And people's opinion! what is that?" and Vivian lifted her head proudly as she spoke.

"I think you would have enemies; and I think people's opinion is a great deal."

She leaned her head upon her hand again an instant. It was a great deal to Vivian.

Then she looked up once more with her eyes full upon Tom's face. "If I can force them to carry out papa's last wishes, I will do it, Tom," she said. "If I cannot—"

She did not finish the sentence; she was not accustomed to saying what she would do if thwarted in her own will, but Mr. Adriance understood. Bent would have to run the house as best he might for the boys. Vivian would not be there.

Tom did not reply, and with some excuse about exercising the horses got out of the room.

"I'll have a few words with Wilkie about all

this nuisance," he said inwardly, as he walked away. "The knot is tied as tight as anything can be, and the only decent thing is to let it alone. As keen a woman as Vivian would see it in an instant if she were not upset. If any one must show her the folly I'd rather it were Wilkie than a man outside. I wonder where that Cyp is. I must have him off with me for a drive. I wish somebody would bequeath those two boys to me!"

CHAPTER XIX.

NO MORE HAVISHAM HOUSE.

MR. ADRIANCE lost little time in carrying out his intention of finding Mr. Wilkie, and nothing could have been more to Mr. Wilkie's satisfaction.

"I'm very glad you came in, Mr. Adriance," he said, as he bowed him out at the end of the interview. "Remember my message to Mrs. Adriance, if you please. Simply that I have a plan to propose that I think will relieve her of embarassment about my wards."

"I will, thank you! It's a nuisance, any way. I can't see why those youngsters shouldn't have their share and welcome. They're the best part of the old place, by far, to me. So I hope your plan will make them stick, somehow."

"Now," exclaimed Mr. Wilkie as he heard Tom go over the stairs, "I've got at just exactly the whole thing I want. Adriance tried to be very cautious, but a free-hearted fellow like him can't cover up with phrases very much. That makes up my mind. I wouldn't have the boys with a vixen like that, velvety as she is, if she begged for them. And they can't stay in that house alone if she clears out, as she says she will.

I'll let Wynt fight it out his own way. He'll be twice the man for it. He thinks it's his duty, queer fellow that he is, and that'll keep him up till he's twenty-one. If he gets sick earning his living, or I think he'd better come in here and make a lawyer, I can manage it well enough. The first thing is to get clear of that fascinating cousin of his. I'll take back that hard name I called her; she's not quite that. She loves grace and elegance for their own sake, but she has no heart; born without one, that's all. I'm glad she's no longer a Havisham, and that the judge got the name tacked on to Wynt and Cyp three months after they came. And does any one think he was going to do that and then leave them beggars for Vivian to feed? I'll get hold of Wynt before the day is out and send him to make her a graceful good-by."

Wynt was more than ready, and he tapped at her door the next morning with his head erect.

Vivian was in the same blue chair, her hands playing languidly with the tassels upon its arms.

"Oh, it's you, Wynt dear," she said, reaching out gracefully to take his hand. "How charming to have you come in. We are very sad and dull here, Tom and I. The house is a sad place. Tom, hand Wynt a chair."

Wynt took it, let the hand holding his cap hang over the back of it, and looked quietly into

Vivian's face. "Vivian," he said, "do you think it is right to put aside uncle's last words as having no weight at all?"

Vivian started slightly. Was Wynt broaching the subject? Why should not *he* be perfectly satisfied?

But she concealed her surprise instantly. "Why do you ask me such a thing, Wynt?" she said, as if gently remonstrating. "These painful questions are all settled for us, don't you know?" And she laid a touch of her soft hand upon his. Only a very light touch; boys do not like too much petting, of course.

"I ask you because I want you to answer. Do *you* think it is right, whatever other people may say?"

"Then, Wynt dear, since you ask me, I do not."

"*I* think it is a cruel thing, as well as wrong. Do you think it is?"

"Yes, Wynt; I do."

"And you would not feel satisfied to have the will he wished to set aside followed by you or me?"

"No; how could I? Since you ask the question, Wynt."

"I thought so, and I'm glad, for that makes us agreed. Then you'll be sure not to take it unkindly when I say Mr. Wilkie gives me leave to go away, taking Cyp too, of course. That

arrangement about the home was one uncle wished to change, no doubt."

Vivian had time to collect herself before she answered, for the surprise had put Tom on his feet in front of them both.

"Now what a ridiculous lot of nonsense, Wynt! How do you know that was what he meant? And the thing's got to be carried out. You can't help yourself. The house is to be considered as your home."

"Very well; it may be. But people do not always choose to live at home, do they?"

Tom was staggered. He knew very well what Vivian had chosen, and might still choose to do.

"But, Wynt"—and the pressure on his hand was this time made close and quick—"I don't understand. This is too sudden. Go away, did you say? Are you quite sure that is right?"

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"But—you would leave us? That would be a great change! And where would you go? We should want to understand all about that. It must be just the place."

"Mr. Wilkie is satisfied about that. He is my guardian, you know. It would be with a friend who will take good care of us; and it is not far away. That will satisfy you, I am sure."

Vivian hesitated. If the truth were told, she would rather it were somewhat far away.

"MR. ADRIANCE TURNED AWAY." Page 159.

"Now see here, Wynt," broke in Mr. Adriance, "what do you propose to do, if you cut clear of this?"

"To go into Brainerd and Gray's and work for Cyp and myself. We have something to fall back upon, but nothing for going ahead, so I strike in there. Uncle often talked of a business life for me. I was to choose, you know."

Mr. Adriance turned away with one of his long whistles; but Vivian put out a hand gently towards him.

"Tom! Why do you disturb Wynt when he has his mind comfortably made up? It is a great matter for a young man to do that, and it has to come, first or last. Mr. Wilkie is a good counsellor and papa's choice for Wynt. If he is sure Wynt is right and will be in a safe, happy home —if he is satisfied—"

"Then you are, do you mean to say?" Wynt asked.

"Why, yes, Wynt, I am satisfied. I do n't see that I have a right to interfere. The old house will seem very strange without you, though."

"Oh, you 'll soon get past that. Perhaps to-morrow, then, if I can get everything picked up. I 'll go now, for I want a last ride on Blackwing. I suppose I shall have to let him go. I can't keep up such luxuries any more."

He had a glorious canter and came back feeling quite made over and fresh.

"It's a good thing, too," he thought. "Vivian talks about 'getting my mind comfortably made up,' but she doesn't see just how the process goes on. Some of the 'pulling,' as Cyp would call it, goes pretty hard. Doesn't it, Blackwing?" and he smoothed the mane Waite took such pride in for its gloss. "*You* don't think it's easy to give up the dear old home, do you?" he went on. "I love every inch of it so. And I don't feel quite cut off from the master that's gone out of it while I'm here. But it don't do to mind hard tugs, old fellow. You'll think so, if I have to sell you for an old carriage horse, I'm afraid."

Waite stood ready for him as he came up. Wynt threw him the rein with the "Thank you" Waite had learned to expect, but he lingered a little. He did not seem quite ready to see Blackwing led away. He was giving a touch to the headstall here, a caress on the shoulder there, or smoothing the horse's nose, while Blackwing snorted and whinnied in return.

Then he turned and began to leave them, in his usual silent way, and Waite looked after him curiously.

"I never see him seem to turn to the animal for comfort so," he thought. "But it's no wonder. He needs all he can pick up. He's had a dead hard pull these last two weeks for a boy,

Mr. Wynt has." And he began to lead the horse away.

But Wynt was facing about to come back. "Waite," he said, and Waite turned.

Wynt was holding out his hand. "I sha' n't see much more of you, Waite," he said. "I'm going to leave the old home very soon; I suppose Blackwing will have to follow. So good-by."

Waite's face turned really white. He had lost his old master: was he to lose his young one too?

"Oh, don't worry, Waite; I'm not going very far. Only down to my old room at the gate; but I sha' n't be about the grounds any more. Blackwing will have to go farther, poor beast."

Waite's face did not brighten, and mouth and eyes opened as he looked at Wynt. "Shipped!" he said at last with a little moan. "And that's what will be coming to the rest of us, then, in our turn. Not that I care for that part of it, though, with two masters gone."

"Oh, no, Waite, I don't think so. I don't feel I've any right to stay, as things happen to be left; and we have to do right, you know. But the rest of you are all useful. You'll stick, and I'll see you once in a while."

He left him this time, as quietly as if nothing were changed, and with his eyes dropped in their old thoughtful way.

"It's a wicked scandal!" muttered Waite in-

dignantly, standing and looking after him as if rooted to the ground. "There are those in the house that could help it if they would; he need n't tell me. Nor the judge never meant it, neither; I'd risk every horse in the stable on that. 'Doing right,' he calls it. It's a queer kind of right for some folks; but if his share's done on that score, it's mighty well done. If I ever find it hard holding up to where I ought to be, it'll help me to remember how that boy walks out of what should have been his own. And I say again it's a wicked scandal; and there's those that could help it if they would," he repeated, as he led Blackwing away at last.

CHAPTER XX.

OFF TO THE COUNTRY SEAT.

It did not take Wynt long to make his preparations. He went about them instantly and with expedition. The first thing was to tell Cyp, and the second to keep as much as possible out of Mr. Adriance's way.

"He's worse than Mr. Wilkie to fight," he said; "good, kind old Tom!"

The news spread like wildfire from Waite to the other servants; Waite could n't keep it to himself and breathe.

Bent came to Wynt actually bowed over and without a word.

"It's a shame, Bent! I never meant you to hear it from any one but myself. I looked for you when I came in, but you were n't about. It's only decided this morning; but I ought to have told you first."

Bent looked carefully in every direction. There was no one near. "I'm afraid, Mr. Wynt," he said slowly, finding words at last, "I'm afraid it was decided long before that—one night when I heard Mr. Thorpe promising Miss Vivian he would do something that she wished."

Wynt started as if he had been stung. "Are

you sure, Bent? Then *I* am sure, ten thousand times, that I am doing right."

He stood still a moment, and then wrung the old butler's hand. "Never mind, Bent! I shall be close to you all the same, and you 'll like to see me my own man; since things are as they are, I mean." And he went steadily up stairs.

There was a little room near the front door at Barbie's called a parlor, but it had up to the present time stood empty and unoccupied. She had no use for such finery as parlors, she declared. Wynt looked about his own room and Cyp's, at treasures they had there, and remembered how this was. Why could he not put these things into Barbie's empty room? He and Cyp would have a little home, then. They knew how to use a parlor, if Barbie did n't. That would make everything all right. Sundays and evenings had been rather a puzzle before; and where were they to ask any friend to come?

There was no very great amount of things, it was true, only the few mementos of East Indian life that they had brought across—a few Indian rugs, two or three bamboo chairs, a curious carved table from their mother's room, a few Eastern curiosities, and so on—but Wynt was sure he would make out.

"There are those pictures, too, that uncle put here because he said they belonged to us—mamma's, that she left when she went away.

I'm sure Vivian will not object to our taking all this. She would rather it was gone. Of course I must go and ask her if Waite may lend a hand to get them off."

He started to find her, but met Cyp on the stairs. Now for it, then! But how much was it best to tell the boy? That was the only question that seemed hard.

"Cyp," he said, "what are you about just now?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Cyp languidly. "I guess I was looking for you. I'm tired and my head aches. Things are so different from what they were. Oh, I wish Uncle Thorpe could be down stairs just to-day!" And to Wynt's amazement Cyp burst into a little agony of grief.

Wynt drew him up to him quickly and got him off into his room. Cyp had been so quiet since those first two or three terrible days that Wynt had thought he was settling into the new life, child fashion, with only a short-lived pain. Yesterday was soon going to seem a good way off to him, he thought. But he found his mistake now, and quite a little time had to pass before he could venture to bring up what must be said.

"Cyp," he began at last, "what would you think of making a little change?—if we were to go down to the 'country seat' to stay? Mr.

Wilkie and I think it would be best for some reasons, and Barbie says we may come."

Cyp was silent a moment and then shook his head. "I'd rather stay here," he said stoutly.

"But I think it will be easier out of the house, don't you?"

"No, I don't. I'd rather stay where uncle always was; and I like large places best too."

Wynt almost smiled. "Oh, you poor little Havisham!" he thought. "Luxury is a pretty good thing to you, is n't it? Well, I'll fight up to it for you some day, if I can."

"Then, Cyp," he said, "I'll tell you something more. We have no right here any longer. I think uncle did not mean us to stay, and in that case it would not be right."

"I say, now, you'll never make me believe that!" exclaimed Cyp, starting up with his face suddenly ablaze. "You and Mr. Wilkie together can't do it. Not about Uncle Thorpe."

Wynt looked at him half pleased, half troubled, at this unexpected show of fight. "But, Cyp—perhaps you're right—but we can't really know. The very last words he tried to say look as if he had some other plan that he thought better. We don't know what that was, so we have to let it go and do what is right, as nearly as we can guess. It's hard, but we must 'hold on tighter the harder things pull.' Do you remember that, Cyp? Now if we take all our

things over to Barbie's, we can fix up in great style and have a place all our own. Come along, wont you, and lend a hand?"

It was a busy day after that, for Wynt felt he would rather get the thing over, in spite of protests from Tom and graceful invitations from Vivian to delay.

"But, Wynt dear—Waite is at your service, of course — but why do you make such haste? There surely is no need. Why not stay with us a little longer? Waite can take the things over at any time."

With Tom it was much harder to deal, for his opposition really amounted to something; the discovery that "not far away" meant the cottage at the gate had mounted his regret to the pitch of excitement.

"I say, Vivian, it is simply a scandal and disgrace!" he had broken out. "A part of the family in the house and part of it in the porter's lodge, or whatever you call the thing! How are you going to like the looks of that?"

Vivian did not reply for a moment. She had had some rather "queer" reflections of her own when the discovery was first made; but still, on the whole—

"Now, Tom dear, if you would just be quiet and sensible," she said, as she tried the effect of a change in the position of some ornaments in the room. "What difference does it really make?

The boys have used that room and liked it many a time before to-day. It was papa's own idea. And as for the 'family,' I never considered them part of it, especially; did you? Do you call it separating the family to have let Mrs. Lewyn go home? She concluded to do so, I believe, only the day that we arrived. There, Tom, I think there's a better contrast of color with this so."

Tom got out of the room as well as he could and tried Wynt next on the subject of haste; he was really distressed, as Wynt could not but see.

"I say, Wynt, you're disgracing the family! What in the mischief is all this hurry about, if you will go? It looks as if we'd fired you out. Do you think we have? Or do you want other people to think so?"

Wynt sat down on the bamboo hamper he was packing and pushed back his cap as he looked up. "Mr. Adriance," he said, "you're extremely kind. Wont you sit down on some of these things? I'm firing myself out, if any one is. I believe with all my heart you'd like us to stay. I can't help thinking so. But I can't see that I've any right to; and if the thing is coming, I like to get it over, do n't you know?"

"You have a right to stay anywhere if you're invited, I suppose," was the answer from Mr. Adriance; but there was rather an awkward silence after this.

"Well, I've said my say. You're a determined youngster, though, as I've found out before. But I wish, for the sake of all that's respectable, you'd hold on a few days. Let people outside have time to say, 'The king is dead,' at least. And understand one thing: you never go out of a house that belongs to me for any notions you take into your head!"

"All right," answered Wynt, smiling; "and thank you, besides. Now there's one more thing I don't like to pick up without speaking of it to Vivian."

"What's that?"

"A little sort of portfolio, one of those queer East Indian things, straw, in purple and red and yellow dyes. Uncle took a fancy to it and I begged him to use it. It lay on his study desk. But I always remember that it was mamma's, so that if no one cares I'd like to take it along."

"Go for it, then, of course. It's your own. Vivian is down there, though, if you think it better form to speak of it. I'm going to take the horses out; it will do me good. Will you come along? Or wont you ride behind them because they weren't left to you?"

"Not so bad as that; but Waite's coming up for these things. I'll go as far as the library and explain about the portfolio."

He did so, very sure Vivian would not regret seeing anything East Indian go out of the house.

"It's empty now," he said, holding it up. "There were some law-papers lying in it that Mr. Wilkie had to get to finish up a case."

"Empty!" repeated Vivian as she took it tenderly from Wynt's hand. "Poor, dear papa! It might as well be! Everything seems empty since he left it, does n't it, Wynt?" Then she handed it back to him. "Why, certainly. Why do you ask me? It is your own. It is pleasant to think papa used it, but you will cherish it, I know. Did you notice which way Tom went?"

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?

IT is easy to make a great change, but harder to realize that it is made. Wynt went about his new life the first few days with the feeling that it was for those few days only. He had gone somewhere to do something, but it seemed only as some odd thing taken up. He should push it through, of course, but he could not get the slightest feeling that it was his life, and to be his life, really and for years.

"How do you like it?" Lee found opportunity to ask, when the book-keeper left the office for a moment and Lee looked in at Wynt mounted on his stool.

"Have n't quite got hold of it," answered Wynt. "The old times seem the real ones yet, and I feel as if I were acting in a play."

"Well, the play will seem real enough before you 're as old a performer as I. It 's a big drag. I feel like hanging myself that I ever let you come in. But I 'll keep Warnock off you as much as I can."

Wynt smiled. "I do n't think I 'm afraid of Warnock. I want to get these figures in right. I believe that 's all I 'm anxious about."

"It 's strange how matter of course it all does begin to seem, though," he found himself thinking, as a little more time had passed. "I begin to understand Lee's calling it a 'mill.' Round and round, the same thing every day. I like it, though. I like taking up a thing and gripping at it and feeling like a man. It seems awfully queer to look back and see how much loafing I used to do. And I like to see Cyp so jolly there at home, and think I 'm earning it for him. Poor little Cyp! I shall have to be wide-awake to get him all he needs. But he 'll never eat bread that does n't belong to him, nor beg nor borrow what was n't intended to be his. We 're safe out of that, whatever comes."

The figures "went in right," and the bookkeeper, who had looked doubtfully at Wynt when he came in, began to pass rather more into his hands than his predecessor had been trusted to do.

"I like that still, dark-faced fellow of yours, Lee," he said one day, nodding after him as Warnock had called him off. "There is n't a word out of him that is n't called for, and those black eyelashes of his do n't seem to get lifted by the hour, sometimes. He just grapples what 's given him and sticks to it. I was afraid there was too much high-stepping in the training he 'd had; but he 's all right; no trouble about him, if he holds out."

"He 'll hold out," answered Lee as he turned

away. "More trouble for him than with him," he added under his breath, "in this place."

He passed down the store and met Wynt coming back.

"How are you, old fellow?" Wynt asked heartily as he passed. He had not had a chance for a word that day.

"Headache," answered Lee. "Did n't get more than four hours' sleep last night."

"Four hours' sleep? What 's the matter?"

"Nothing the matter. Must get some pleasure by night, you know, if you grind all day. I 'll get a chance for a smoke, and feel better by-and-by." And he passed on.

Wynt hardly knew whether he saw figures before him or not, for a while after that. What in the name of sense had got hold of Lee? or was keeping hold of him rather. He thought that wretched nonsense would have worked itself off before now.

"Junketting with miserable fellows away down below him," he said; "below what he ought to be, at least. He 's disgusted with it himself, I know. He can't help it. What kind of sport is there in that? If he thought there was, to begin with, it can't have held out. He really seems to imagine it 's spiting the store! I wish they 'd take him out of it. What 's the use of trying to make a colt swim like a duck? A

colt is n't good for much, though, till he breaks to harness. I wish Lee would give in."

The next few days he seemed to have scarcely an opportunity to speak to him, and only commonplaces passed between them when he had; but Lee's face did not satisfy him. It brightened whenever he saw Wynt coming; it was a great pleasure, evidently, to have him in the store. But the look Wynt did not like was there, through all the friendly chatting, half bitter, half reckless, never really happy, as the free-hearted Lee Brainerd used to be.

And Jem was another one. He had n't passed Wynt without speaking, again, since the other day; but evidently things did not go right yet.

"Have you been to Mab yet?" Wynt asked suddenly at last, as he ran upon Jem in the doorway again.

"No, I have n't been to Mab," answered Jem half defiantly. "Why should I go to her?"

"You know well enough why you should go to her. Because it 's right, to begin with. March along, like a man, and make everything as it should be. I never heard that getting married was the only thing in the world. Can't you be friends? If you got her into the way of caring for you, to begin with, what right have you to take yourself off?"

"And what right have you to ask me, any more?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I haven't any. But I'm a working-man like yourself now, Jem. Remember that."

"He said I was to do it because 't was right," muttered Jem as he went off about his porter's work. "They say he's cleared out of the Havisham House and come in here because he thought that was right. Maybe it was, and maybe it was n't; that's what people say. But his doing of it is more lesson to me than his talk can be."

He hoisted a huge piece of freight from the wagon with the ease that strength and sleight of hand together give, and then pulled his cap over his eyes with a quick jerk.

"But I'm not going back to Mab though, for all. I can't. She throwed me over, and she 'd not 'a' done it if she 'd cared. Or if she does, I can't help it. It 's as rough on me as on her. I don't care for much more out o' this world with her gone."

Mr. Wilkie did not lose sight of Wynt. He made an excuse to send for him from his office two or three times, besides looking in at the new quarters at Barbie's, and satisfied himself that no harm was being done.

"Let him work it through," he said to himself. "I enjoy seeing the thing done, and he's all right. I like to see a fellow fight it out on his own line—when his line is a good one."

So everything ran on for a time, the novelty wearing off and people getting used to seeing Wynt go into Brainerd and Gray's and up the back street to the rear gateway of the grounds.

They did not do it without a good deal of surmising and excitement, however, at first. There was something wrong somewhere, every one was sure, and sure every one else was right in thinking so. Judge Havisham never meant to have things go on like that. Or if he did, some undue influence had been brought to bear. Still it was said the boys had a right in the house, after all. Then it must be the Adriances' fault. Wynt would not take what he thought did not belong to him. Of course he would n't! They all knew him well enough for that. But the Adriances could make him feel that something did belong to him, as well as the judge had before them, if they chose. Why not? And the feeling did not lose strength, though the talk about it passed by after a time, as all nine days' wonders get laid upon the shelf.

Vivian went away in the midst of it for an indefinite time, leaving Bent and Burnham to take care of the empty house. Gossip said it was to let the back-gate idea get a little old; but no one, aside from all that, supposed a shadowed house, too newly so to admit of merry company, could keep Mrs. Adriance very long.

As for the rest of the household, they had

been divided between grief and sentiments that they did not freely express. So many years of service had not passed without each member of the family being pretty clearly measured and read. The judge, the boys, Vivian—oh, the servants knew!

And whatever they might know or not know of the movements of the last few weeks, each had his or her own private opinion as to who had done it all and how it had been done.

Bent went mechanically about the house, neglecting nothing; but what was the use of darkening or opening rooms, lighting gas or putting it out again? The light was gone out of the old house for ever to him. He had never thought he could outlive Mr. Thorpe. But if he could only hear the footsteps of the young masters about, and know they were growing up to fill their uncle's place! That he had been sure they would do, whether he and Mr. Thorpe lived to see it or not.

"Mab," he said one evening, as a little silence came, "you remember the night I told you Mr. Cyp's saying about 'holding on'?"

Mab's face flushed quickly. Did she remember!

"Well, that night, dark as things seemed, I remember another thing I was saying to myself. Young folks think their troubles sore, and so they are sometimes; but they little know how much

room there 's left for still more to come in. And now look what the last two months have brought. Not a Havisham left in the old house! In my day, too, Mab. I would n't have believed it could ever come; but in my day!"

Mab hesitated. "But Miss Vivian will be coming back some day," she said.

"Yes," Bent answered; and each understood why the other said nothing more.

"There is no earthly way to bear it all, Mab," Bent began suddenly again, "if it was n't for the 'holding on' we were talking about the other night. I'm getting too old a man just to breast things. I could never carry it alone."

"Oh, yes, father," answered Mab cheerily, "we must hold on to it—the Hand that held on to the cross for us; that 's what I always think. It 's comfort through everything. And it 's never going to let anything touch us that it does n't see fit."

"Yes, Mab," said Bent, as he rose to go back and put out his lights; he would not let the Havisham House show a dark front in the evenings yet; "I know we are like children in the nursery to him. He knows we 'll think all these things trifles before long; just forgotten in sight of what he 's giving us as his time comes. But they seem heavy just now, Mab; and somehow I've got a strange feeling as if there was more to come, more to come still, before very long."

Mab watched him a little anxiously as he went out. More to come still? What could there be more? Unless she were to be taken away from him; and even then! Yes, he would miss her; but she was quite a good-for-naught, she thought.

"Oh, but he's just got a little nervous with it all. He took my matters with Jem to heart a great deal, and now there's all this. But whatever comes, we'll be happy. We can't pine with such a love and a kingdom as we know is open to us, and such a Hand to hold to through it all, and knowing all's right. We'll just hold on the tighter." And Mab took up her pretty bit of work, humming a peaceful little song to herself meantime.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHOULDERING UP.

THREE months passed, with no special change in the way events moved on. Wynt began to feel as if he had always been divided between sitting perched upon his stool and getting down from it to meet some demand from Mr. Warnock at the other end of the store.

Lee's dislike to the latter seemed to grow more intense and harder to conceal, and Wynt was glad whenever he could feel that he was meeting a call that would have been Lee's had he not been there.

"It *is* hard to stand the man," he said one day, half laughing, to himself; "but he don't seem to stir me up as much as he does Lee, which is a good thing. I think that supercilious, lordly way of ordering a fellow about amuses me, at the same time that it really does 'grind,' as Lee says, if you've a mind to take it so. I believe he's trying to work me a little too, the last two or three weeks. It may be imagination, but I think so. I don't know what started him, unless it was that thing about the carpet the other day; the day I told a customer it was last year's stock, when he had just got him up to the buying pitch, a sixty-

yard bill, by saying it was just in and the latest thing out. I never dreamed I was running against him till I saw him get hot."

Wynt turned back to his books. His head ached to-day and figures did not seem clear. Unconsciously a new problem in multiplication began to come up.

How many days, weeks, months, and so on of this sort of thing were ahead of him before he could hope to get any higher up? And when he got higher up, how much difference, after all, was there going to be in the 'grind'? And as Cyp grew older and his wants became proportionately greater, was he ever going to be able to work it all out?

He had no special talents himself, but Cyp had. Cyp must be educated for an artist; that had been always understood. It was one thing to pay an absurd little board bill at Barbie's and another to— But what was the use of thinking about it all? It did seem to be standing up pretty big and black to-day; but he was ashamed of himself. He thought he was more of a man.

He put his pen hastily back on the figures again. So much time lost to Brainerd and Gray.

"If I could only look in uncle's face when I got home at night!" he found his thoughts suddenly persisting, without any leave from himself; and one of those great waves of longing that would rush up now and then rose and went over

him. A Siberian mine would be sunshine if his uncle were only in it, he thought.

At that moment he heard Warnock's voice at the office door.

"This way, Havisham. I'll send you out a few moments, if you're not wanted here."

Wynt stepped out, and Warnock pointed to a roll of carpet lying near.

"I want you to take that and carry it over to 12 Walnut Street," he said.

Wynt gave it a glance, and then unconsciously turned another quick one into Warnock's face. A slight shade of confusion came into the latter, but it was covered in another moment by the smile Wynt had learned to dislike so much. The carpet was heavy, and even Jem had hardly ever carried one without his wagon for Brainerd and Gray, as Wynt knew very well.

But Warnock had his own reasons this time, and that was enough. He muttered something about hurry, and Jem being off with the wagon getting freight, and walked away.

Wynt felt his blood getting suddenly hot. "He means to get even with me on the carpet question," he said, as he glanced after Warnock's retreating form.

Then he stooped, shouldered the clumsy roll, and went out.

As he came in, nearly half an hour later, Lee opened the door.

"Where have you been running off, all this time?" he asked. "I'd like half an hour's outing myself. I only had five minutes, and you were gone when I came in an age ago."

"I carried a carpet to 12 Walnut Street," answered Wynt quietly as he hung up his hat.

"*What!*"

Wynt could hardly help smiling at the mingled astonishment and wrath in Lee's face.

"*You* carried a carpet! What business was that of yours?"

"Jem was off, you were out, and I was the next youngest hand in the store."

"Yes," said Lee sarcastically. "And Jem and I were both back here in five minutes more. Didn't you spoil a sale for Warnock the other day? And you look as cool as if you hadn't been off that stool. Where's your Havisham pride?"

"I did not want to shame it by leaving my duty undone."

"Who calls it your duty? And what a spectacle besides! Wynt Havisham toting a load like that!"

"If Wynt Havisham's dignity is going to suffer from carrying a bundle, it's pretty soft material," was all the satisfaction Lee got, as Wynt went quietly back to his proper work.

Lee walked away to his. A customer appeared for him at the moment and Lee gave his

attention as well as he could; but some pretty distracting thoughts kept uppermost and he was hot to his finger tips for Wynt.

"Just like Warnock!" he thought. "He just caught his opportunity for that. I don't see how Wynt stands him as he does. I wish he had tried it on me. I don't think I would have touched the thing, and it might have helped me out of the store."

But by the time his customer had gone a different set of reflections began to come up. Somehow, Wynt sitting there so quietly, with his errand done, commanded more respect than he had ever felt for him before. Havisham dignity did not seem hurt at all. And the thought of Lee Brainerd being sent out of the store for a "row" with his superior looked, comparatively, very small.

But from this time the "mill" began really to seem to Wynt what Lee had warned him it would.

That headache did not wear off. What was the matter with it? He missed his gallops on Blackwing, he thought. Somehow there never was any getting off in the air with really free feeling any more. The room by Barbie's front door was jaunty and homelike as could be, and great fun; but Cyp had to be looked after and entertained, of course, whenever he could be there. And there was n't very much of a day left after six o'clock.

It was no matter for a while, but somehow it began to seem very queer to look forward to its being always like this.

"However, that's the way men do, and I can do as they can, of course. It will be all right when I get used to it. They don't generally begin at my age with a small boy to carry along, though. There's where I have the advantage of them. That's the pride and pleasure of the whole thing. Poor little Cyp; he doesn't know how I enjoy it. If I only find I have stuff enough in me to earn all he's going to need. I don't know yet whether I've got much business make-up in me. Perhaps that's what Mr. Warnock is trying to find out." And he smiled as he heard his name called, at the very moment, in that familiar voice.

The roll of carpet had not been his last experience of that person's skill in making things uncomfortable when it seemed unnecessary that they should be so.

"Regular persecution," Lee declared indignantly. "Why, he's worse than he ever was to me. He knows you're above him, and he's trying to pull you down; that's all there is of it. He sold newspapers on the street, in old shoes, before he came in here as boy. He's made himself all he is."

"Then if he's made himself what he is, he's above me, instead of below," answered Wynt

pleasantly, "for I've never made myself anything yet."

"You haven't, eh? There are some people that think you have, then. But I don't see how you stand him, or the whole thing, anyway, as you do."

"Oh, come, Lee, brace up! You want to make a man of yourself, wherever you are, and Warnock is as good a stepping-stone towards it as any other, if you only look at him in that light. Take the whole thing as a swing at the gymnasium; develops muscle, you know. Come round to-night and try the banjo with Cyp and me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HUNDRED MILES BELOW LEVEL.

VIVIAN had returned before this time, bringing a small, quiet company with her, sufficient to break the solitude of the house and not too gay for public criticism.

Mr. Adriance picked up Cyp at every possible chance and coaxed him off for drives, half amused and half vexed to see a shadow of hesitation on Cyp's part.

"I believe, on my word, the youngster fights shy of it, on some idea the turnout don't belong to him any more. He always had a droll little air of seeming to feel it did so in the judge's day. And he's not going to beg or borrow favors, that's plain. I'll get him out of the nonsense after a while; but I believe I've lost Wynt. I wouldn't see him inside of that store if I never saw him, and evenings amount to nothing. It's a beggarly shame, the whole business, that's all I have to say."

Cyp "fought shy," still more, of being landed at the house on their return, as Mr. Adriance tried several times to do; and though Vivian sent a ceremonious invitation to lunch and another to

dine, the hours did not suit work at Brainerd and Gray's, and beyond a formal call of acknowledgment Wynt had not seen the inside of the house since he left it.

It was quite as well, he thought. The home feeling was gone, it was not the greatest pleasure to see Vivian, and what did he care for all those strangers there?

"Tom 's all there really is," he thought. "It *would* be awfully good if I could keep a little hold of him. But he goes with the rest of it, I suppose."

Meantime Brainerd and Gray had come to their own conclusions about their new clerk.

"That Havisham will be valuable to us some day," the junior partner said as they talked over affairs.

"Do n't flatter yourself we shall keep him, though," was Mr. Brainerd's reply. "They say he 's only here on some notion of his own, and he 'll get over it some day. A year or two of hard work takes the sentiment out of a boy."

"I do n't know. This one seems to have a grip on what he takes hold of. That 's what 's going to make a successful man of him. He 'll have a business of his own and get rich in it before we 're very old men. I wish I could see some of the rest doing as well."

"That means Lee, I suppose," answered Mr. Brainerd with a clouding face. "I can't excuse

him, Gray. The boy has n't the right spirit, and he wont do well till he has."

"I do n't think Lee is in the right place myself," was the reply. "I 'm afraid it 's a mistake. It goes across the grain. Why not let him strike off to a profession if his taste lies all that way?"

"Because I think he 's in exactly the right place!" answered Mr. Brainerd excitedly. "If a boy can't stand a pull across the grain when it comes, he 'll be good for nothing as a man; for he 'll meet one, at any odd minute, as long as he lives. That 's just the thing I 'm trying with him. If I could see he 'd learned the lesson today, I 'd send him off to college to-morrow. I do n't want to do it. I 'd like to see the name of Brainerd in the business when I 'm ready to go out; but, of course, we put our own wishes into the background with these boys. We want to see them happy first. But if Lee can't do his duty in one place he 'll never be sure of doing it in another."

"No, I suppose not. I should feel a little shaky about him, at least if he can't pull up a little shorter than he is now."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Brainerd quickly, with an undefined feeling that the other meant more than he said.

"Well," said his partner hesitatingly, "he 's not altogether satisfactory in the store, as we know; but I hear some pretty hard stories about

him from outside. I don't like to mention it, but if he were a boy of mine I should have some anxiety as to how far he has an idea of carrying the thing."

"I will tell you, then, how far I have an idea of his 'carrying the thing,' whatever that may mean," said Mr. Brainerd excitedly. "Not a single step! He may stop just where he is!"

"Very good; excellent, if you can bring it round. But what are you going to do about it? If he were in college you could threaten to take him out and set him to work; but to turn him out of the work he is in would suit the young man to a T. And suppose you try it; what would you do with him then? No; I don't think you can work it that way, Brainerd. It's a job he's got to do for himself. If you can get a supply of the right spirit and stick it into him, all right. I should think he might catch a little from that mate of his we've perched on that stool."

Mr. Brainerd "wished he might, with all his heart," and the conversation came to an end; but Mr. Brainerd was far from satisfied.

"Gray's right enough," he said, as his thoughts found the subject holding on uncomfortably; "the boy's got to do it for himself, as far as the going right is concerned; but if he's going wrong, there must be some way to stop that."

Accordingly, the next time Wynt asked Lee

to come round for the evening he drew his face into a demure contortion and said he "did n't know." "There 's something mighty queer at headquarters the last week," he went on. "I do n't know exactly what 's up, but there 's a close lookout on what I do after it gets shady out of doors. I shall have to keep pretty shady myself till it blows over, and make up lost time afterwards."

"Lee Brainerd!" exclaimed Wynt, turning round upon him suddenly, "is it possible you can stand being watched? Bringing watching on yourself, I mean?"

Lee shrugged his shoulders with a low whistle, and Wynt turned away as suddenly as he had faced him before.

In an instant Lee had sprung after him. "Don't, Wynt!" he cried entreatingly. "Don't! I can stand the governor and all the rest, but I can't stand it if you turn your back on me in disgust."

Wynt faced about again instantly and gave him a hand. "No, Lee, I did n't mean that. I'll never turn my back on you; but the *thing* I must be disgusted with. That, you know, I can't help."

"But 'the thing' and I are all the same, bad luck to it all!"

"They 're not, Lee. You know better. You despise it all the time as much as I do. What

do you want to throw yourself after such folly for? You've got the making of a man in you and you know it, and a man can never enjoy living a hundred miles or so below his level. It's no sort of use."

"I don't know anything about 'miles,' but, after all, it's the feeling so far below you that takes hold of me just now."

"Below me! Well, if you think so, just step up and stand beside me, for you'd only be your best self then. But we've both got a Leader, Lee. Do you think He likes to see us straggling out of ranks? I tell you he doesn't. He lived and died to show us the true march and help us back into it when we're out. Just get hold of His hand and 'hold on,' Lee. Try that a little while and see where you are."

As Wynt walked home and turned into the Havisham gate he felt the first real rustle of autumn leaves under his feet. The season had been slipping away and even the glory of the late tints had almost passed.

The rustle gave him a quick unpleasant feeling. Gone! Since the day Cyp linked the dandelion chain on the front porch, spring, summer, almost autumn, and what had they carried away! These brown leaves were fresh, just barely out on the trees, that day when Cyp tried his chain on the door. What a little time!

"But looking back isn't going to do," he

said, stepping into Barbie's little porch and leaving the yellow and brown carpet behind. "Pushing ahead is the only thing. If I felt sure I could ever do as much of it as Cyp is going to need! I never doubted it when I first struck in at Brainerd and Gray's, but I've got a little better idea than I had of what things really are, of the pushing that's got to be done. And as for Cyp's education, his special 'trade,' I mean, he'll have to go away for that. There's nothing here. Well, perhaps I can work off with him somewhere by that time. It looks pretty big to me just now, that's a fact, but I must stick the tighter. I've undertaken the thing for him and there's no one else. I could stand any amount of pinches for myself, but I don't know how I could ever endure it if I found I was scrimping Cyp."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HARD QUESTIONS.

THE Havisham House was deserted once more by all but the faithful few who, according to the conditions of the will, were "keeping it up" as in the judge's day.

That amounted, of course, to a mere form when Vivian was away, as she was to be now for two or three months at least, and a very empty and annoying form she considered it to be.

"Such strange folly on dear papa's part, Tom," she had said to Mr. Adriance, as she was preparing to leave. "Do you wonder that he saw it himself and intended to make better plans?"

"If there were any better ones to make," answered Tom, stretching himself and turning a page of his book. Vivian was never to entrap him into saying he thought there were.

"Yes, better in every consideration," returned Vivian, ignoring the fact that Tom's answer was not quite a positive one. "Of course I do not care to be here after the summer is past. Why should I, now that papa is gone? There is nothing here. And yet this retinue of people is to be kept in the house. And Bent is getting to be a very old man for the position he holds. I think,

Tom, when I come in the spring, I must bring some one to take his place."

"Well, now," exclaimed Tom, rousing up suddenly, "I can't say I see the point in that. Bent is as competent as he ever was, and I don't ask to see anything better. And he has been faithfulness itself to the family more than half the years of his life."

Vivian smiled. "Of course, Tom; that is the very difficulty. There is such a thing, you know, as a limit to years; and there is such a thing as style. *You* 'don't ask to see anything better,' with your dear easy old way; but people who come here may think that something less antiquated—less of a relic, you know— But where can I have laid that paper I wanted to ask Mr. Wilkie about? I've searched every cranny of my desk. Well, I'll let it rest somewhere, wherever it is, till we return."

Mr. Wilkie, on his part, would have been glad to hear her say so. He had more papers and more clients to give thoughts to than he felt he had thoughts to give. The firm of Havisham and Wilkie had been too favorite a one for many clients to give up after the judge's death, and an over-accumulation of practice was upon Mr. Wilkie's hands; while, in the midst of office pressure, his own personal affairs began to assume troublesome form. Investments were repeatedly proving unfortunate, and complications were arising which

threatened to bring upon him liabilities which he saw no way to meet.

"If things would not crowd so in this unimaginable way!" he repeated to himself twenty times. "There's enough in that lead-mine out there to clear everything up twice over, if it could be got out. But everything at that same lead-mine hangs fire so. This break-down of the machinery that they've reported just now puts it all back and calls for more capital to repair and start again. It's a pretty hard knot that things are tying themselves into for me. If it draws much tighter—"

But Mr. Wilkie did not seem to like finishing the sentence. If the knot should "draw much tighter," he would find himself in a position that it was not pleasant to specify in words. To say that everything would be swept away and he should stand as poor as when he began life would be disagreeable enough; but to add what would also happen, with liabilities that remained to come upon him, was still more unpleasant.

Then he would try to shake the whole subject off again, and trust to to-morrow for what to-day could not seem to meet.

"It will work round somehow, of course," he would insist to himself. "There'll be some way out. 'The darkest hour is just before daylight,' I should say to any one else;" and he forced his attention back to other people's affairs.

Among these Wynt's interests were often uppermost, and he watched him pretty carefully, determined that the least sign of his being in any way the worse for his experiment with Brainerd and Gray should take him out and put him wherever it seemed best—into the Havisham House, if it looked more like that than anything else; neither Vivian nor her fancies should be considered if he once made up his mind.

"I doubt if I do it, though," he was sure to wind up with saying. "I believe Wynt would chafe himself to death, with that notion of his in his head; and you can't drive it out. It would go against my own grain, too, to tell the truth," he added one day to Dr. McPherson, when the subject had been alluded to between them confidentially.

"You believe the judge meant to take back that arrangement about the boys, then?" the doctor asked.

"I don't half believe he ever meant to take back a rap's worth he 'd fixed up for them. You can't make me believe it. But with the pretence of it, and what she is otherwise, that Mrs. Adriance is too much for me. I don't want Wynt where any such skirts can sweep over him. If he 'll just get two or three years older some day, I'll take him in here. He's got precisely the head for it. He pleaded his own case here till he got his verdict from me, you know. You would have

laughed to see the boy swoop down my points and set up his own. He did it well."

"Well, I'd rather see him here than handling tables and chairs the next story below, it's a fact. But there's no money provided for any such plan, as I understand."

"No, but I'd manage that easily enough. I could advance what was needed till he's twenty-one, and then he could pay it back. He'll have to take what belongs to him then, notions or no notions."

"If you can make him," laughed the doctor. "He's beaten you once, and he may again."

But Mr. Wilkie hardly heard him. He was busy with a miserable and most uncomfortable twinge of thought that had come up as he spoke of advancing anything Wynt might need. Would he have anything to advance, by that time? Might not his own creditors be waiting for twice what he found himself able to pay?

"However," added Dr. McPherson, as he got no reply, "Wynt doesn't seem to be pining under it much. He's all right so far. Cyp's the one I am more anxious about."

"What's the matter with Cyp?" asked Mr. Wilkie, rousing suddenly.

"Oh, I don't think there's anything the matter with him; he'll weather it through. He's moped a little under the change; that's all. You can't expect him to square at it, as Wynt has, of

course; but a child forgets yesterday, you know, before to-day gets very old."

"Moping, is he?" thought Mr. Wilkie, after the doctor had gone; "I must ask Wynt about that." But the next time he saw Wynt, Cyp was with him; his cheeks were red from a drive he had just had with Dr. Thad, and he asked Mr. Wilkie why he didn't come round. They had jolly times with the banjo at the room, he said.

"I don't see much moping about that youngster," Mr. Wilkie thought, laughing, as he passed by; and he let the doctor's suggestion pass also.

Cyp's red color was gone again, however, in a very short time, and left it at once easy to notice that there was a paleness of the whole face and a faint blue circle under the eyes; not very marked, but enough to show the need of a tonic or a general picking up, and making the boy look quite different from the rollicking, hearty Cyp of a few months ago.

Wynt needed no Dr. McPherson to point out the change to him. He had been watching it for a month.

"I know exactly what it is. Cyp can't get used to things. He don't get up a bit of home feeling, and it seems as if he never would. I thought he would get reconciled to leaving the house, but it's no such thing. He pines for the whole of it, uncle and all the rest. Oh, I wonder if I was wrong to him in packing him out of it!

But I should have been wrong to other people if I had n't; and he was n't happy there at the last."

So the little touch of anxiety Wynt had felt in his new responsibilities deepened and really began to weigh. No amount of "circumstances" were a matter of any importance for him; he could get along. But if he were making a mistake for Cyp! Or if Cyp was to need anything he could n't do! He ought to be taken off somewhere for a shaking up. If Vivian would only have asked him to go along!

But he checked the involuntary thought almost angrily. Did he want Cyp to go begging? Vivian might take care of her own affairs, and he would take care of Cyp.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE THICK OF THE FIGHT.

Cyp was not the only perplexity that weighed upon Wynt during the next few weeks in the store. Mr. Warnock's "persecution," as Lee called it, did not seem to wear out. So far from satisfying itself by the petty annoyances in which it took form, it rather grew by what it fed upon, as Wynt could not help confessing to himself. The carpet experiment, among others, had been repeated, with a slight pretext not unlike the first, and Wynt could not help laughing as Lee came to him about it in renewed wrath.

"Yes, I thought I'd cleared off the carpet score that first time," he said, "but I suppose I didn't reckon the full value. Never mind, though, I weigh more and measure an inch taller than I did when I came into the store; so you see he does not harm me much."

But he did not think best to tell Lee of another little experience that he strongly suspected weighed more with his superior than the lost carpet sale. Thanksgiving Day had passed, and was a holiday, of course. The store was closed for the day, and all were rejoicing, Wynt especially

happy in an invitation to the Wilkies' for dinner, which would make Cyp all right.

But he let himself into the store for a few moments, early, to finish a small piece of writing that must go off in the mail. It was the bookkeeper's business properly; but he wanted to get out of town for the day, and Wynt had volunteered. An unusual press of work the night before had prevented getting this done.

As he sat on his stool in the office he could just see the front door, through the office railing, with a side of the window beyond.

Suddenly an eye came against the glass from outside, peering through the crack between the window and the curtain within. The same thing was repeated at the door the next moment, and both movements were as if to discover whether any one was inside.

"I think you 've got left, sir, whoever you are," Wynt said with a smile to himself. "Brainerd and Gray make no sales to any one to-day."

He stooped over his writing again, thinking the attempt had been given up, when to his astonishment a key was slipped into the lock, the door opened, and Warnock stepped inside. He walked quickly into the store as far as Mr. Brainerd's private desk, took some keys from his pocket, tried one, then another, hesitated a moment, then stooped to examine the lock, and returned to the key he had first tried.

Wynt thought he had seen enough, and as his own work was just finished, he caught it up and went quickly towards the door.

Warnock's back was towards him, and he did not seem to hear him as he approached.

"Good morning, Mr. Warnock," said Wynt quietly, lifting his hat as he went by.

Warnock started as if struck, looked at Wynt, turned white and then red, stammered a good morning in return, and then, pretending, as it seemed to Wynt, to start again, muttered some confused words about having mistaken the desk, seeing his error now that the key did not fit, and hurried away to his own.

He kept clear of Wynt the next few days, and Wynt kept his reflections, which were peculiar at least, most carefully to himself. The sooner he forgot that he had seen Warnock on Thanksgiving morning the better, he felt very sure.

Petty annoyances do wear, however, like the dropping of water on a stone, and with those and the close confinement, which Wynt had not got quite used to yet, and his thoughts about Cyp and others about Lee, and the responsibility of his own work, he did find himself wondering sometimes if it were the same world he had been living in six months before.

"It seems to me I was like the old deacon who used to 'think of nothin','" he laughed one day; "especially when I meet the fellows coming

home from school. I thought a few lessons out of those books made a good deal of work. I should like to play with them a few days now. I would n't go back, though. I do n't know enough, that 's the only trouble; but since work has come to me I like it. Especially," he added, "especially for Cyp."

He was the last one to leave the store that evening, at six o'clock. Only Jem was left, to finish locking up. As he approached a corner not far from the store door he saw that a group of young fellows stood there quite in the shadow of the wall, for street lights were not too numerous in Edinburgh. They seemed to draw a little closer together and press farther back as Wynt approached, and he instinctively glanced towards them. He looked away again as quickly. Lee was one of them.

Lee joining any company that wanted to keep out of sight! Lee shrinking away into darkness because he did not want to be seen by him!

Could he have been mistaken? No, he was not. But, after all, was it anything more than Lee had really told him of before?

He half turned to go back and pull him away.

Then he hurried on, confused and reproaching himself for not having, somehow, pulled him away already in all this time!

"Suppose it were Cyp!" he exclaimed to himself, "Cyp at Lee's age. Should n't I find

some way to persuade him out of such a track? Lee's not my brother, it's true—not in one sense—but we come pretty close together in more ways than one."

Then he found a sudden revulsion of feeling sweeping over him—a feeling of disgust, almost of loathing. How *could* Lee bring himself to low, miserable ways, whatever they might be? He was glad Lee had spared him any more special explanation than he had given.

He pushed open the cottage door and went in to Cyp. Somehow Cyp's eyes seemed very big lately when he looked up as Wynt came in. Had they grown large or was his face growing small?

"How-d'ye, old fellow?" he said, coming towards the table where Cyp sat, with pencil and some crumpled paper lying before him. "Let's see your work."

"No, I could n't do anything. I did n't like it, and I scrunched it up. I say, Wynt, I wish it would n't get dark so long before you come home."

"You do, eh?" And Wynt sat down beside him, smoothing out the paper as he spoke. "What's the matter with the dark?"

"Oh, I do n't know. Everything seems so awfully empty till you come. It seems as if the old big house was round me, and yet it is n't, and it's horridly still."

Wynt shot a swift glance into his brother's face. It was the first time Cyp had ever said anything like that.

Of course six o'clock was a very different thing for Cyp from when they first came over to the gate; Wynt had remembered that, and hurried home impatiently every night. But had the youngster been sitting there, all these evenings, with "haunting, mocking memories" for the only company he had? Pretty shivery company Wynt thought that was for him.

"'Awfully empty,' is it?" he said lightly. "Well, hold on two or three weeks and we're past the shortest day, and there'll be more light and less darkness every time. There's always a little holding on to do, you know, somewhere. Where's Barbie? Why not go to Mab's and wait for me, now and then? I'd call for you at the window when I come by."

"Oh, I don't know. I say, Wynt, Jem don't seem to come there any more. And when Mab's not really talking to you, when she's only still, I believe she's thinking of it."

"Thinking of what? Jem may be there several hundred times without mentioning it to you. And see here, now! No more good drawings spoiled in this style; 'scrunched,' do you call it? I want these brilliant designs of yours preserved. Come along and get some supper, then."

The thought of Lee had a new worry laid

pretty heavily on top of it now in Wynt's mind. If he should n't be able to do the right thing for Cyp! He was not doing it now, that seemed plain. But what better could he do? Cyp might come down and meet him, as far as that went. But no; he might as well be out alone at nine o'clock as at five at this time of year.

However—and he brightened up a little at this thought—Cyp must have his share of that "gymnasium exercise" Wynt had talked about to Lee. He must learn to stand rubs; and perhaps the sooner he began the better, after all. But they must not come too hard.

In Lee's case, though, it was different. "The sooner he *stops* the better!" Wynt thought; and every time he came across Lee the next day the dark figures crowding against the wall haunted him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BATTLING FOR LEE.

WYNT had no opportunity for words, however, till the day was nearly past. Then Warnock sent him down stairs for a miserable dusty piece of work at the furnace—Jem's business and no one's else; but there was some excuse, as usual, about haste.

Lee was in a small packing-room adjoining, getting a delicate piece of furniture ready for freight.

Wynt finished his work and then went, sprinkled with ashes, straight to Lee. "So it seems, Lee," he said steadily, "you did not find it very bad being watched, and you try hiding as the next step in 'enjoying yourself.'"

Lee started and flushed crimson. "So you did see me. I—was n't sure."

"And you hoped I did n't! You did not want me to!"

Lee did not answer.

"Will you tell me who those fellows were? I wont say those friends of yours."

Lee stiffened up a little. "One of them at least was a friend of yours. You know Hal Eric-

son as well as I do, and he is as much a gentleman's son as either of us."

Wynt felt as if foundations were slipping away from him. Hal Ericson! Had he come to hiding in street corners too? "He's not behaving like a gentleman then, whatever he is. Will you tell me who the rest were?"

"No. You would n't know them if I did. I told you the other day they were out of your range."

"And I told you they were out of yours. Will you tell me what you were doing with them, then?"

Lee hesitated. The truth was he had felt a vague sort of terror about himself stealing in of late. He had half a mind to tell Wynt just where he stood. "It's a quicksand sort of feeling," he had repeated once or twice to himself. "I never meant to go very deep, but it *is* a little deeper all the time. I may get where I'd like to feel bottom by-and-by."

Still, to get out of it was to settle down to plodding for ever on the "old mill" floor.

Suddenly he took his resolution. "Yes, I *will* tell you," he said. "They were telling Hal and me about a place where there's money to be made by cards."

"And what then?"

"Well, if I could have luck, I might make enough to get away from here and strike out for

myself somewhere, enough to have some amusement as I go along, at least."

"Now, Lee," and Wynt was looking him steadily in the eyes, "you've just got one choice to make, mighty soon too. You've got to choose between all this miserable lot of stuff and me!"

Lee's eyes dilated with a frightened look. "You don't mean to say you wont be my friend?"

"No; I'll always be your friend. But there's no comfort in the friendship any more. We can't do it. You can't enjoy me and a set of fellows like that at the same time; and I can't take any satisfaction in you. So it's good-by to one or the other."

"Wynt," cried Lee, greatly distressed, "you're the only person or thing I do take 'satisfaction' in in the world. Can't you see there are two of me? The best of me sticks to you like ten thousand burrs; it's the other fellow that's in all this mess."

"No, there are not two of you. You are Lee Brainerd, and making what you can of him as you go. If you choose to say there are two sides to him, the mud you drag one side of him in will stick to the other; that's all. Come, Lee! What do you say?"

At that instant the door at the head of the stairs opened, and Warnock came rattling over them with his usual rapid step. He glanced

towards the furnace, and then stepped to the packing-room door.

"Ah!" he said, with the sneering smile both Wynt and Lee so hated to see, "when you can attend to the furnace, Havisham, there is work up stairs."

"I have done so already," answered Wynt, with a glance at his besprinkled clothes, and turning towards the stairs.

"You have, indeed! Then is there any call for your services just here?"

"None that I know of."

"Ah!" and the smile curled still more disagreeably. "Then there is a customer waiting in the carpet room. Go and show carpets till I come up, if you please."

Wynt sprang up the stairs. The clothes-brush that should hang at the head of them was nowhere to be seen. "I believe in my heart he has hidden it!" Wynt exclaimed mentally. It certainly was not there, and Warnock had stood firmly with his back against the little closet where Wynt could have found water for his hands.

He went on, besmirched and dusty. "I wonder who it will prove to be," was all he had time for, the carpet section lying close against the door.

Mrs. Archer, of all people in the world! She was one of Vivian's most fashionable acquaintances, and had smiled on Wynt at the Havisham

dinner-table hardly six months before. She did not patronize Edinburgh warehouses much, but she was here to-day, her dress elegant enough for even Vivian's taste, and her carriage at the door.

Wynt saw the whole thing in an instant. Warnock had sent him up to show himself, but he would be following on in an instant; he would not make Mrs. Archer over to any one else.

Wynt took the flash of a second to collect himself, and then stepped up to her exactly as he would have done at home. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Archer. I was given no time, or I would not have brought dust and ashes into your service. Can I serve you in any way?"

In an instant Mrs. Archer had given him one of her most brilliant smiles, and held out a hand delicately gloved. "Invisible dust, I am sure, Wynt," she said. "But if there were any amount of it, it would be lost in the pleasure of meeting you. Don't spoil me, though. Are you sure this is your work? I don't get a young gentleman to show me carpets every day."

"Don't you?" laughed Wynt. "I'll show them to you every day with pleasure, if you will come in. I'm not as well 'up' as some of the rest, but still—" and he began to pull out some rolls.

It was just as he expected. He had scarcely sent two rolls flying when Warnock's step was

heard running up the stairs, and he opened the door.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Archer," he began, with his most obsequious smile, stepping directly in front of Wynt and forcing him to one side; "I was detained for one instant. You will excuse an incompetent salesman for the moment, I am sure. I have something very handsome, just in this morning, that I can show you now."

"Thank you, Mr. Warnock, you are very kind," said Mrs. Archer gracefully, but with none of the cordiality she had given Wynt; "but if you will excuse me, Mr. Havisham is doing exceedingly well. It will really be a favor if you will allow him. We are *old* friends, you know;" and she gave Warnock a smile that ought to have let the arrow go in softly, but it did not.

He reddened, made some inaudible reply, and turned away.

"Now, Wynt, we have the floor! See if you can suit a fastidious customer for Brainerd and Gray."

Warnock occupied himself as he best could for the next half-hour, he hardly knew how. Then he saw Mrs. Archer pass out of the store, Wynt holding the door for her, and her carriage drive away. Then he saw Wynt go up and pass in a check for a larger sum than Warnock had got from a day's sales in the last six months.

Wynt went back to his stool with a very queer

feeling, after this. "Carpets for ever!" he whispered to himself with a half-laugh. "It does seem as if fate were making them a stumbling-block between Warnock and me. I shall hear from this. But it was not my fault; and I had a good time, at least."

If he had, Warnock certainly had not, and he never forgave. His attempt to humiliate Wynt had humiliated himself instead, and the wound rankled. He had very little to do with Wynt the next day, but his brow lowered if he even saw him coming near.

Wynt was not in the least surprised at this, but it suddenly seemed to him that there was a coolness on Mr. Brainerd's part, instead of a marked kindness, almost cordiality, which had grown steadily since Wynt entered the store. To-day it seemed to Wynt that some inexplicable change had come over his manner, though not a word was said.

"Well, it's a good thing to have a clear conscience," he thought. "He certainly can't be put out about that check yesterday, as Warnock was. It must be a fancy of mine. He may have a thousand worries that I don't know of. But it really seemed to me as if he gave me almost a suspicious look once to-day."

Mr. Brainerd, so far from being "put out" about the check, had spoken of it with much satisfaction to his managing clerk. "Havisham

is doing very well; I don't know but we had better take him out of the office and make a salesman of him altogether," he said. "In fact, I'm not sure but we may owe Mrs. Archer's visit to his being here."

Warnock's own peculiar smile spread over his face. "In that case," he answered insinuatingly, "it might be a good plan to put Lee into the office, and balance things again."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Brainerd, looking quickly into his face.

"Oh, not very much. Only two boys are not always sure to help each other along, if they're thrown together too much."

"Not help each other? Perhaps not, but I have felt Havisham would be a help to Lee. Lee's not likely to be very much help to any one, I'm sorry to say. But Havisham—I've seen only what gives me confidence in him."

"Yes; a dark, still face is a good cover," said Warnock, with an almost imperceptible sneer, as he turned to move away.

But Mr. Brainerd stopped him. "Now, Warnock, please to explain yourself. If you say as much as that, be kind enough to say more. I am not fond of hints, you know."

"I beg your pardon; I was scarcely aware of giving one. I don't like to speak of personal matters, but—in fact, I don't think he has improved since Havisham came into the store."

"He certainly has n't, I 'm sorry to say. But what has Havisham to do with that?"

Warnock gave a slight shrug.

"Have you seen anything that looks like it?" persisted Mr. Brainerd.

"Well, since you insist on it, I think there is something between them. They certainly have very earnest side conversations now and then, and things do n't go any better afterwards. Evening before last—I really do n't like to speak of it, but there was something rather marked—Lee got in with a very poor set of fellows, as I happened to see, hanging about in a shadow somewhere, and Havisham very soon came along. He only made a little movement towards them, and stopped long enough for a few words to have passed. He was very cautious, but there seemed some understanding; and I was still more sure of it yesterday when I caught them together in the packing-room, evidently in a very private talk, and very much confused when I appeared. Havisham—" and Warnock disappeared to meet a customer.

Mr. Brainerd was thoroughly roused now. Lee had been a heavy anxiety to him of late, but he was really angry at last. This was the first distinct story that had come to him from outside, and not much of a story, either, but it meant more than it told. And Havisham in it too! Was it possible Warnock was right?

In another five minutes Lee found himself

summoned to his father's private office and the door closed behind him. Now for it! he thought. It never rained but it poured. He had been simply miserable since his talk with Wynt, and now here was his father, evidently with something disagreeable to say.

"Lee, what were you and Havisham doing together in the packing-room yesterday afternoon?"

"I was busy there, and Wynt stopped at the door to speak to me."

"And what was he speaking to you about, if you have no objection to letting me know?"

Lee's face paled suddenly. The recollection of the whole thing had half sickened him whenever he had thought of it since. To lose Wynt's respect, Wynt's friendship! No; Wynt had promised he should not lose that, but how could he tell? And now—what was coming now?

"Then you do object?" asked Mr. Brainerd, as Lee did not reply.

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then suppose you put your objections aside, or tell me in spite of them."

Lee was silent again.

"Well?" persisted Mr. Brainerd.

"I'd rather not. People don't always care to tell what they are talking about. I don't, at least."

"Then suppose I ask Havisham?"

A sudden terror seized Lee. He did not want Wynt dragged into any trouble. "Oh, don't do that!" he exclaimed, and then added suddenly, "But he would never tell."

The next moment he saw that he had made a mistake, and added hastily, "I mean to say, it was more my affair than his."

"And is he specially concerned in your affairs?"

"In some of them. That is to say, he—don't ask me, if you please. He certainly does his duty in the store."

"Possibly; but I want men who do their duty out of it as well as in. And one thing further I have to say. I have more idea what that conversation was about than you think, and I want no more such reports coming in. I can do without either you or Havisham in the store very well; and as for you, perhaps you would like the Perch better, if you can't find good company, and keep it, nearer home."

Lee went away if possible a little more miserable than before and with a confused feeling that he could not tell what anything meant. He was getting somewhat used to "little breezes," as he called them, of this kind with his father, but he had never seen him really angry before; and how he could have any idea of Wynt's talk with him was beyond his guess.

"But why should he be angry with Wynt for

preaching to me? That's more than I can see through. He might better be thankful to him, for it's the only tether that's holding me in very much. And the Perch! I'm not much afraid of that. He has trouble enough trying to make a farm out of that old granite hill with five miles of cobblestone fence, without trying to make a farmer of me. It would be working harder soil than he has now. But I can't stand it with Wynt thinking as he does of me. I think I'll let Ericson and the rest alone for a while, and see how it seems. But it will not be for fear of the Perch."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TROUBLE FOR CYP.

MATTERS seemed to quiet down a little at the store for the next two or three weeks, and then came Christmas holidays, and Wynt was more than thankful when Mrs. Lewyn Havisham invited Cyp and himself to spend the week with her.

He could get but two days at the utmost, but he cared very little about that; it was Cyp's Christmas that had been distressing him. How he was ever going to get him over it he had not known.

Not that there would be the least word of complaint from Cyp; that was not his way. But it would be a tough tussle for him with those ghosts of memories; and it would seem "horridly still," Wynt feared, in spite of his own best attempts.

There was no stillness in Mrs. Lewyn's wide-awake, sunshiny, cordial little establishment, which seemed to Cyp vast and spacious after Barbie's, and which was full and running over with entertainment that had been planned for him. Wynt watched the sparkle coming back into his eyes with a peculiar feeling—a great relief and pleasure, that had a quick pang under it, after

all. Cyp's eyes used to sparkle all the time. They never used to need brightening up until *he* tried to take care of him.

Mrs. Lewyn had some similar reflections also, for she was too keen-sighted a little woman to mistake surface shining for a steady light underneath. She had needed but one look into Cyp's face when he arrived to tell her some secrets she had had her misgivings about before. She saw the sharpening down from the merry outline it used to have, and she saw the dark lines under the eyes and the expression that comes of not saying much about what one feels the most.

"Wynt," she said lightly, as Wynt's two days drew to a close, "I wish you would leave me that boy until spring. Could n't you live without him? Do you know what I have to do? I have to live without Mr. Havisham for the next two years. That business of his in Manilla wants looking after. It always does when he leaves it and I think I have him really at home. He goes back once more, and talks about two years. Think of me! And neither chick nor child of my own. Lend me Cyp a little while. Can't you think of it?"

Wynt hesitated. Her few words had said a good many things at once, and one of them was she thought Cyp needed something that Wynt could not himself do for him.

"You think he needs it," he said quietly.

"Why, I want him, Wynt! But still, to tell the whole truth, I would not ask him away from you out of pure selfishness. Are you quite sure he is not a little solitary there at the gate? He has lost a great deal, you know. He is not the child to forget that, and I'm afraid he broods a little while you are away. There must be odd hours out of school when he misses you a good deal. Saturdays, perhaps, too?"

Wynt felt as if some miserable weight were laid suddenly at his throat. These things that he had been trying not to make much of himself even a stranger could see!

"I am afraid you are quite right," he replied, looking back into her eyes steadily; "as right as you are kind. I would do without him, of course, if—"

"If you were sure he would be happy? Well, sound him about it a little. He can be thinking of it for the rest of the week."

Wynt went directly to find him. "Cyp," he said, "by the end of the week you'll be more at home here than you condescend to feel at the gate, I'm afraid."

Cyp laughed. "It's awfully jolly, of course. It would be better than anything but the house, if you could stay. But I can stand it till New Year's without you, of course."

"Can you! That's flattering to Mrs. Lewyn. And she flatters you in return, by wishing you

would stay until spring. How would you like that?"

To his amazement Cyp threw himself upon him and broke into an agony of trouble, such as he had seen no sign of since the first terrible weeks when their grief was new.

"Don't, Wynt! I wish you wouldn't say things to me! I wish you wouldn't talk about things, nor make me talk. I can stand it all if I can keep still. But I'll never stay away from you. I should die if I did. I most die, as it is, without uncle and the house; but I'm just living on you, don't you know?"

Wynt soothed him and assured him it was only for his own choice, and that he should not know how to live at the gate without him, and he should never let him stay away long unless he wished it very much; but it was some time, even then, before Cyp was himself again. Things had been pent up too long to quiet down in a moment when a gap was once opened to let them free.

As for Wynt, it was ten times worse for him. "Oh, Cyp!" he found himself saying silently, as he held him with a quick, intense pressure for one instant close, "I've said I'd hold on to you tighter the harder things pulled, and now I don't know but I ought to let you go. I'm doing you more harm than good."

But still if Cyp would not be let go, what could he do then?

It was all out of sight again, however, before Mrs. Lewyn was encountered, and she had not a suspicion of the little whirlwind her invitation had aroused. She sent Cyp gayly back to Wynt at the end of the week, with many messages of regret at letting him go and the assurance that he was fifty per cent. more of a boy than he had been a week ago.

And so life began again in the old way, rubbing along in the every-day rut, with no change except Wynt's increasing impression that Mr. Brainerd looked upon him with a very doubtful sort of feeling, not to say dislike.

He tormented himself to find a reason, but in vain, and so one more trouble was added to his regret and pain about Lee, his anxiety about Cyp, and the annoyances that Warnock found more and more constant opportunities to invent.

"I can walk right over all Warnock can do to me, though," he used to say to himself; "but I must say Mr. Brainerd worries me. If he would only once say a word, I could have it out with him and find out what's the matter. But I can't very well walk up to him and ask whether he likes me or not."

Lee, however, was a little comfort. He seemed quieter in every way, and had a fashion of getting near Wynt whenever he could and standing about without a word, but with something indefinable in his manner that seemed to ask if he

might; and he spent now and then an evening at Wynt's room, to Cyp's great satisfaction, and none the less to Wynt's.

Whatever feeling Mr. Brainerd had, meantime, was carefully fostered by Mr. Warnock and increased by delicate nursing as rapidly as prudence would allow. There was no need of haste. What he was so sure of accomplishing he could wait for the right opportunity to allow. Lee was dropping his sail for a little while just now, but that was not likely to last; and with the next breeze that tempted him off Havisham might very possibly find himself out at sea.

SOUTH BERKELEY
PRESBYTERIAN
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TEMPTATION, AND A SCORE TO PAY.

MEANTIME Mr. Wilkie's perplexities seemed to thicken rather than disperse, so far as his personal affairs were concerned. Threatened losses became actual ones; one struggle after another to better things proved in vain, and one claim after another that he found himself unable to meet pressed nearer and nearer to the day of its demand.

In the midst of it all letters from the lead-mine began to arrive urging a plan for increase of working capital, and doubling and redoubling assurances that with this new ability to develop the treasures of the mine large revenues were certain to come in.

Every fresh suggestion of this kind only increased Mr. Wilkie's mental disturbance.

"A year ago," he thought, "I could have met this demand without a second thought. Now, when the mine is my only hope, my only way out of all this danger, I cannot command the trifling amount necessary to dig at what is there.

"And it *is* there," he added. "There is no question of it—a fortune, and a handsome one.

Ease and independence if I get at it, and debt and dishonor if I do not; for I call debt and dishonor the same thing when it comes to saying that your debts can't be paid."

There was just one consideration that eased the matter: the thing need not be decided quite yet. A month or so later would be in time, and something might turn up in the meanwhile.

And in that meantime he must keep mind and thoughts clear and free for other people and their affairs, and Wynt and Cyp were not forgotten among them. He met Wynt not unfrequently near the foot of his stairs and stopped for a few words.

"Not ready to give up yet, Wynt?" he asked once or twice.

"Not yet," Wynt always answered; "I have n't done much 'holding on' yet."

"I'm not sure but you have," Mr. Wilkie returned, looking scrutinizingly into his face. "And I do n't want too much of it, either. Too much is never good, you know. How's Cyp doing with his share?"

The look Mr. Wilkie had been sure he detected, as if some pressure were being silently carried, deepened suddenly in Wynt's face.

"He's sticking to it all right," he answered, "but I'm not sure it's good for him, all the same."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Wilkie quickly.

"I think he pines for old times a good deal; but I don't see any way to bring them back for all that."

Mr. Wilkie looked thoughtful. "You could bring back part of them if you would go into the old house, Wynt," he said.

Wynt felt himself almost draw back, away from the words. How could Mr. Wilkie torture him so? Go back into the house? The one thing he could do, and yet the one thing he could *not* do, for Cyp.

"If you will show me that that would be right, I'll go there, Mr. Wilkie. In the meantime I would stand out in the street for him, if it would do any good."

"Well, send him up to see me in a day or two," said Mr. Wilkie, waiving the subject hastily. "I'd like to see what I can make out of him for myself. By the way, is anything heard of Mrs. Adriance planning to return at present?"

"I can't tell you. Bent has a letter now and then, with some orders or other, but she has not spoken of coming as far as I know."

"Not before April, I presume. There are better things than an Edinburgh winter in life, you know."

"Those youngsters are both feeling their

fight, I don't doubt," the lawyer continued to himself as he watched Wynt out of sight. "They stand up to it bravely, for there's not an inch of white feather in either of them; but Cyp at least must n't get too much of it. Yet I can't put them into that great empty house alone in the dead of winter. They're better off with Barbie than there. Somehow the judge did manage to make an uncomfortable jumble of things."

Wynt sent Cyp up; but he came in so fresh from the cold and put on such a boastful little air whenever the subject of "keeping bachelor's hall," as Mr. Wilkie called it, was approached, that Mr. Wilkie could not help laughing, and concluded that the boy was all right and that he could settle the question of lead-mines before he troubled himself very much about him.

That question seemed hard to settle though. A few thousand dollars the lead-mine must have or it would yield him nothing. Given the few thousand, a hundred thousand, to all human certainty, would come back. But where were these few thousand coming from?

He turned to other people's papers and tried to leave his own affairs behind; but they faced him in spite of himself with a miserable sickening sensation that increased the longer it hung about.

At last he took up hastily some papers relating to some "trust funds" that had been placed in

his hands, and a suggestion came as hastily into his mind. Why not borrow these funds? They were exactly what he needed to save him from this great distress.

Why not! For every reason. Among the first, the same that would prevent him from borrowing the amount anywhere else. He himself felt sure it would be safe. Other people would call it a great risk.

But safe or not safe, there was disgrace and wrong legally, if not socially speaking, in such use of a trust; and he pushed the papers away almost as if they had stung him. To betray a trust! The very thought was detestable.

Another month came and went. February had come in and was almost gone, and April was not so very far away. April might bring the Adriances, and Wynt rejoiced from his very heart at the thought.

Cyp might get over his notion about keeping shy of the house and go up there more freely again. In any case, Tom would get hold of him and chirk him up a great deal almost without his knowing it. The horses had been wintering on a farm. They would be back and Cyp was sure to have rides. Poor little rascal! He had not had one, outside of Christmas week, since his last with Tom.

To counterbalance this, Lee was fulfilling Warnock's prophecy and "filling sail" again a

good deal the last two or three weeks. He seemed shy of Wynt, was careless of duties, went no one knew exactly where in the evenings, and the old forced recklessness was coming back into his face.

Wynt could not shake off the consciousness of all this, and yet what could he do? There certainly was nothing left to say that he had not said.

Mr. Brainerd came to much the same conclusion; but there were things he had not said to Wynt that he could say! Mr. Warnock's efforts had not been unsuccessful, and Mr. Brainerd was almost positively convinced that Wynt was in some way "aiding and abetting," if not worse, in all this. A little more positive proof, or the proof of something more positive, was all he needed to put the two boys as far apart as possible, and to put Wynt at least out of his own sight. If he could be as sure where it was best to put Lee, he should be thankful and glad.

Warnock, in the meantime, rather suddenly ceased his open "persecution," and adopted even a smooth, almost patronizing tone towards Wynt.

"What trick is he trying now?" asked Lee, whose quick observation this could not escape. "You may be sure you don't get such smiles for nothing, Wynt. There'll be a score to pay somewhere before long."

"I don't know but there will," Wynt answered in his usual quiet tone.

Lee looked quickly at him, but Wynt's thoughts were not easily read. He had been wondering lately if it were possible that Warnock had managed to transfer some of his prejudice to the head of the firm.

Wynt turned away and walked quickly towards home. It was his hour for getting off at noon, and he was always impatient to get back to Cyp. As he entered the yard he met Bent just by his own door with a letter in his hand.

"From Mrs. Adriance?" asked Wynt, recognizing the "air" of the missive though he had not even a glimpse at the address.

"Yes, sir. I 've but just got it and have not broken the seal."

"Well, if there's any news let me know;" and Wynt turned into the house. Vivian could not be coming home yet, he was sure, glad as he should be if she were.

Cyp was in before him, and at work, as usual, with pen and ink, at the one entertainment where all questions of woe seemed forgotten; dashing off sketches or shading delicate outlines, throwing them into the waste-basket the next moment to do more, and leaving the forgotten ones for Barbie to rescue and treasure up.

As Wynt sat at dinner he watched Cyp keenly, first with feelings of pleasure and then of pain. Bent's letter made him realize that Vivian would be coming some time, and he looked at Cyp

thinking how his face would brighten and the old glow come back when Tom got him behind the horses again. But that very reflection made the contrast of the little face as it was now all the more trying to observe.

"It sharpens down with every month that goes by, I believe," Wynt thought bitterly. "And those hands of his are nothing but a set of pipe-stems. I don't know but I ought to get Dr. McPherson to take a look at him."

And that thought again brought another suggestion that was most painful of all. "What good can a doctor do him, though? There's just one prescription that would hit Cyp, and that's one I'm not able to get for him; nor ever shall be, I'm afraid, what is far worse."

As he went out he looked towards Bent's cottage, sure he would be on the watch for him to tell him the news.

No Bent was in sight at window or door, and Wynt cut across a little path that brought him under the window where Mab always sat. But a gauzy curtain, that screened the lower half when she wished it, was drawn across its wire, and he passed on.

"Queer, though," he thought. "I'm sure Bent would have told me if Mab was under the weather; and I don't know that I ever saw that curtain drawn close in broad daylight before."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BLOW FOR BENT.

MAB was not ill; on the contrary, for the first time in three years she had been just daring to hope that she was a trifle "on the gain." Wynt, after his last talk with Jem, had got Dr. McPherson to go and see her. Since that no one felt sure as to exactly what had happened, except that the pain certainly was better and Mab had doubled her moving about the room.

"I do positively believe it is full half in his telling me I was going to do it," Mab had said laughingly to Barbie more than once. "There's nothing like setting one's spirits up a bit to drive pain away."

"And there's nothing easier than laughing at that time, either," Barbie had replied. "But if the Lord's time has come for the pain to lift a little, the doctor will give you the right prescription, whatever it may be."

So when Bent came in Mab had met him with one of her brightest smiles, and the warm little spot of comfort he had felt growing into his heart lately about her crowded the "house troubles" a trifle farther out.

He held up the letter to Mab, and she knew at a glance whom it was from.

"I brought it down thinking I 'd read it here first, and give you the bit of amusement of having it fresh."

"Yes, do, father," she said, settling herself comfortably in her chair to listen. "We don't get the treat of a letter every day."

Bent broke the seal, got the smooth, elegant bit of paper out, and began to read, managing the square, high-topped English chirography as well as his old-fashioned eyes might do.

There were one or two trifling instructions as to some indifferent matters at the house, then a word of graceful remembrance to Mab, with the hope that she was improving and that Bent was quite well, and then—

But Bent had stopped reading and his face had blanched. He was looking at the paper with fixed eyes, and seemed to have forgotten Mab and all the world beside.

Suddenly he remembered her again, and thrust the letter into its envelope hastily. "That —that 's about all," he said, and rose from his chair to get away.

But Mab had laid her hand upon his arm and was holding him fast. "Father," she said, "sit still. Tell me what it is. You may just as well. You said you felt there was more trouble coming. It has come now. Tell me what it is."

"No, it's not come yet; not altogether yet," Bent stammered helplessly. He knew Mab would not let him go.

"Then it's close upon us. Tell me, father dear. You need not be afraid—I'm stronger now. Don't you know I am? Tell me. It *can't* be that a Havisham could ever be cruel to you!"

"Cruel?" repeated Bent vacantly. "I don't know. Oh, no, not cruel, I am sure. No, no, no, not cruel. It's all right. I am an old man, of course. It's not strange Miss Vivian thinks of that, not strange. It is quite right to bring a new butler when she comes."

Mab had let go his arm now and was leaning back in her chair, her face almost whiter than his.

Suddenly a bright red spot came round and burning into each cheek. "Not cruel?" she exclaimed. "Not cruel, when you have given the best of all you were to her father and the rest of the house!"

"Yes, I know. But she speaks of that. She says that is remembered; that I'm not to think the contrary; and though she'll not be here till April, she tells me now, that I may be looking about. I'm a valuable man yet, she says, and there's many that would like my services."

An almost imperceptible tone of satire crept into Bent's repetition of these last words. "Many who would like his services." His services

were not the thing, by any means, for Vivian, but good enough, quite, for some other Edinburgh house.

And how many houses were there in Edinburgh where the services of a butler were in demand at all?

"And to leave the Havisham House means," began Mab slowly at last.

"Yes," said Bent, without looking up, admitting all the suggestions of her unfinished sentence.

It was not necessary to elaborate. They both knew without words. It was all standing clear and distinct before their eyes.

It meant, probably, almost certainly, leaving the gate. It meant Bent's income stopping; and that meant drawing upon his little savings and the precious legacy from the judge, and using them up, instead of leaving them safe for Mab, which had been the one treasured hope of his heart. And it meant feeling old and abandoned, and being sure of it, while he had thought he had ten or fifteen good years of work left in him yet. And what it would mean after the little savings should be used up neither he nor Mab liked to ask themselves, even in thought.

Bent sat still, hardly seeming to see things that stood really before him, when he felt Mab's hand laid on his arm again.

"Father dear!" she said, shaking his arm

gently, as if to rouse him and bring him back, "what are we going to do now?"

Bent shook his head. "I don't know, really, Mab. It can't be true altogether, as it seems to me."

"Yes; it is true. I never knew Miss Vivian fail of anything she set her hand to. But I know what we must do. I can tell you, if you can't think. We must do what you told me the night Jem went away. We must just 'hold on the tighter the harder things pull.' There's love and comfort and help when we need it, all there! It was enough for me then, and 't will be enough for us now; you need never fear. I know this is bitterer, some ways, than that. I'd rather trouble touched me a thousand times than you. I'm young yet, and I'm getting better, don't you know? But whatever it is, the Hand's there to help us. And there's nothing dealt out that it does n't guard us through it all, nothing, father dear. It will be all right—better than any other way, when we once find it out."

Bent listened silently. "Yes, Mab, you're quite right. Somehow I can't seem to get hold of it all just yet; all that Miss Vivian says, I mean. Did you know I was so very old, Mab? I wonder they did n't tell me before. Mr. Thorpe could n't bring his mind to it, I suppose. I ought to have thought of it myself."

"It's nothing to think of!" exclaimed Mab,

rousing to her spirited tone. "The rest of us can count years, and see ways and actions, as well as Miss Vivian can. You're no different these ten years past, and didn't Mr. Thorpe always say—" She stopped suddenly. Mr. Thorpe used to say Bent would be good for work longer than he himself; but that was only a sorrowful thing to be bringing up now.

"Well, it's hard saying who's right," said Bent slowly, rising and making another effort to go. "We know the good Lord is, and that's about all we can say. I'll go and think it over a while. She's not coming till April, and I'm to have time to look about. She took that reason for writing me in advance, she says."

"But you'll not take it very hard, father dear," pursued Mab, holding him back still. "Promise me you'll not take it very hard."

"No, I'll not, Mab; I'll get my comfort where there's enough for me, when I get settled to the suddenness of it a little while. But, Mab"—he remembered at that moment that Wynt had asked to be told if the letter brought any news—"if Mr. Wynt should be looking in while I am gone, I'd say nothing to him of what has come. He'd take it to heart for us, I know, and his own burdens are load enough for his shoulders just now. It's as hard a thing, almost, being too young as too old. It will be time enough talking of it when April is almost here."

"Yes; and when April comes something else may come with it that we're not dreaming of yet. We'll just 'hold on tighter' while we're waiting, wont we? and 't will be all right." And Mab gave him a smile almost as bright as the one that had welcomed him in.

"Bless, you child!" said Bent hastily, looking almost wonderingly into her face. "It's a strange thing, I will say, to see a delicate flower of a thing like you putting heart into a strong man like me."

"Well, I'm glad you're remembering that you're a strong man after all," answered Mab almost gayly. "We'll say nothing about it, then, to Mr. Wynt, or even Barbie or any of them yet. We'll just talk to the dear Lord of it and see what he has to say. He has secrets to tell people such times, if they listen, there are those that think."

"Yes; we'll say nothing, Mab. We'll just keep it between us; that's the best way. But we'll have keen eyes watching us. Even Mr. Cyp makes his conclusions when you don't think you've thrown him a crumb. And I must be looking about too, as still as I can, to see if there's an oar to be put out, or an anchor to windward, anywhere in the town."

CHAPTER XXX.

HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING.

THAT was exactly what Mr. Wilkie was looking in every direction to find, but neither an oar nor an anchor that would keep him out of his trouble was to be found. In a few days more he must say yea or nay as to the lead-mine going on, and there would be but just time for success at the mine to help him before the embarrassments closing so darkly upon him would face squarely for settlement.

Then up rose the thought he had put from him so indignantly not long before, the thought of the trust funds. He had plenty of them in his hands, for his name was among the most honored, and his judgment and integrity among the most relied upon, in many a mile around.

Yes; he had heard of men whom every one had felt sure of disappointing the public and disgracing themselves before now.

But, after all, there are different ideas about disgrace. Suppose he knew, absolutely, that a sum he might thus borrow he could safely and with interest return. What was the use of arguing squeamishly about such a thing?

Whose funds should he take, then? The Havisham boys'?

He started up as if in recoil from the very thought.

Well, then, if not the Havisham boys', why any one's else? And did not that start also confess to himself that he did not feel absolutely sure it would be safe?

Once more he thrust the thought away from him and plunged into business and important work that more than filled his hands.

It was a busy time for Wynt also; for Brainerd and Gray were making the "trial balance" of their books, and it was new if not perplexing work to Wynt, though his share in it was small and principally an initiation by the book-keeper in chief. The every-day outside writing was, however, entirely turned over to him, and his stool was his station pretty closely, bringing the advantage, at least, that he was spared the numerous annoying interruptions Warnock had found for him in the past.

But the trial balance would not come out right. There was a hitch somewhere; something was wrong.

There was nothing for it but to search for the error, if error it was, till it could be found; and meanwhile Warnock saw another opportunity to whisper insinuations into Mr. Brainerd's ear.

Those books had been trusted a great deal out

of the book-keeper's care. It was a heavy test of an untried boy to put so much under his eye and hand, and possibly a temptation as well as a test.

Wynt felt that the unexplained coldness had suddenly increased. What could it mean? The blunder, whatever it might be, was far more probably the book-keeper's than his; he had had almost no difficult work to do. And it would be found in a day or two. He was almost certain of that. And if Mr. Brainerd's manner continued the same after that, he thought he should certainly do what he had thought could not be done: walk up and ask if he did not like him. There were other stores in Edinburgh where he could get work. This would be another Havisham House to him if he thought he was not wanted by the head of the firm.

The day closed with a feeling that things were not exactly comfortable at a good many points.

Never mind! He had only to hold on the tighter; that was all; to stick to the right and get his comfort out of that, out of the Lord who had shown him how. He had never come to earth and spent all those sorrowful years to trace out the path for us, and borne shame and death for us too, if His friendship had n't been one to hold on to us through thick and thin. As long as the Saviour and Leader was Brother and Prince as

well, there wasn't much room to be down-hearted or to drag behind. It was all right.

The day had closed, but the store had not altogether. Wynt and the book-keeper had returned in the evening and were working away, hours after every one else had gone, and the problem was not solved. Wynt was dismissed at last; the book-keeper might work a little longer, but Wynt had better go.

He went hastily along the business street with figures, Cyp, the store, Vivian, Lee, and everything else chasing through his thoughts. He did not like the idea of leaving Brainerd's. He was afraid people would call him a rolling stone.

Suddenly a light at the foot of a flight of stairs attracted his attention, he hardly knew why. He had seen it often enough before. It was so inclosed in colored glass as to offer a sort of illumination, which marked to the initiated the entrance to an upper room where certain so-called entertainments, he did not care to ask what, were supposed to go on. The room had been recently opened. He had heard the words "faro" and billiards used in connection with it, and that had been enough.

Something prompted him to glance up at the window. A face appeared at it for a single instant and vanished away. It was Lee's!

Lee's? Wynt stopped without knowing that he did so, and for one more instant the face ap-

peared again, as if anxious for some one's coming and daring a hasty outlook.

In that one moment Wynt beckoned to him and then ran up the stairs. He stopped on the landing, doubting whether Lee would answer; but he did not wait long; Lee opened the door with a hot, irritated look on his face.

"Yes, of course!" he said. "I gave myself away getting near that window, and I deserve to get caught. I'd rather it was you than any one else, though, and now don't worry me. It's no use saying a word."

"Then I'll say it without any use. Come along, Lee. Come home with me. You can't be doing worse than ever. I wont believe it. What do you want in this horrid place, whatever it is? Come off among people that are fit for you."

Lee's face relented. "You're so awfully kind, Wynt, it's a shame to push you off. Thanks, a hundred times. But I'd rather you'd take some other time to dress me down. Somebody will come upon us directly, and I don't care to have it said I am tagged after. How do you know people here are not fit for me? There's more than one Hal Ericson in Edinburgh, if you knew it all."

"Then there are so many more to be sorry for. Come, Lee! I've got enough to think of without leaving you here."

"I can't, Wynt. I never was here before,

really, and perhaps I never will be again. But I have an engagement to meet some one to-night. There! They're coming!" and Lee stepped hastily back into the room.

Wynt let him go and stood aside till the "some one" had come up and passed him; it was of no use, he saw that plainly enough, and he would not "tag."

The door opened and shut for the new-comer, and then Wynt ran down the stairs feeling as if there was something above to escape from in haste. He reached the sidewalk with a spring and raised his eyes just in time to avoid running precipitately against a well-overcoated figure just abreast.

The two looked at each other, and Mr. Brainerd's voice said, "Ah!"

Wynt was already touching his cap with "I beg your pardon," and in an instant they had passed, each going on his way with reflections, to say the least, very suddenly disturbed.

There was nothing for Wynt to do now, though, but to hurry back to Cyp. Poor little youngster! He would be tired enough of pen and ink before now, Wynt was afraid.

As he neared the cottages he saw a figure hovering near the front of Bent's, and on his coming closer it slipped away towards Mab's window and then got lost behind some evergreen-trees.

"That looks like Jem!" exclaimed Wynt,

"CYP'S OUTDOING HIMSELF!" Page 247.

halting a second where he stood. "I declare on my word, I believe it was!" as the figure went out of sight.

But it evidently wished to be out of sight, so Wynt went quickly on and found Cyp curled up in one of the bamboo chairs, his head nearly dropped off into the corner of it, fast asleep, and the table strewed with the everlasting bits of sketching paper that Barbie would be ready to seize.

Wynt went softly up to them and took one after another into his hand. "Cyp's outdoing himself every time," he thought. "He is a genius and no mistake. It's time he was having some lessons. And it's time to begin saving some of these things. That boat lying off that bridge, now! I've seen plenty of wood engravings where the effect was no better than that. I wont let him throw them all away."

He did not like to shake Cyp up, so he took another chair himself, and then began to realize that he was pretty well tired out. The day had been a hard one and the evening harder; the old headache was on again, and somehow there was a feeling that things were getting pretty "thick" all around.

There was trouble coming with Mr. Brainerd, he was sure of that. He had been almost sure of it before, but there was something in the tone of that "Ah!" that told a tale.

However, bad as that was and might be, he could stand under it and anything else that touched only himself. But that little face of Cyp's over there! It never had looked so sharp or so patient as it did just now, huddled down in what ought to be the forgetfulness of sleep. What was he ever going to do with him? How was he ever going to do what he ought?

He passed his hand over his forehead and wondered if he were growing old. This fight of life held a fellow down a good deal harder than he had supposed.

"I don't mind hand-to-hand fighting though, if there's only the least chance. But I *must* not fail with Cyp, and yet I seem to be doing it. And Lee's almost like a brother and there's no one to keep any hold on him but me. If Brainerd and Gray turn me off that may fix me with everybody else, and where is Cyp then? And now Jem—" He could not help breaking into a little laugh then in spite of himself. "I don't suppose I have exactly to carry Jem; but I believe he needs just a little more bracing up to knock at that door of Mab's."

But the laugh was a short one. He was too tired. "If I only had some one to talk to about it all! But there's only Mr. Wilkie, and he's no use. There's just one thing there the same every time, and that I can't do."

Suddenly he roused himself. "And there's

just one thing here, and that is to hold on tighter every time; and that I can do and will. And I have some One to talk to, some One who sees through the whole business as I can't and is always there. If I could n't get my comfort going over it all with Him, there would n't be as much holding out as there ought to be, to say nothing of holding on."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AT THE LAST MOMENT.

THE next day was as busy as the one before, and Wynt only saw Lee in the distance now and then. Mr. Brainerd had been called out of town and would not return until evening, and the book-keeper was still hunting his error in the books. The hours were nearly over when Mr. Brainerd returned, and Wynt only wished as he saw him coming that he could go to him and settle matters at once. If it were not for that unlucky meeting last evening he would; it would not do to look as if he were frightened by that.

But he had not much time for wishes or decisions of his own. Warnock put his head into the office, with an expression sublimated upon his usual one, to say that Mr. Brainerd would see Wynt in his private room.

Wynt went quickly. He was glad to have things find their climax and get over it as soon as possible, and Mr. Brainerd evidently was equally ready on his part. There was a little uncomfortable look about the matter to the senior partner, for he did not forget who the Havishams were, and he had originally felt a strong sympathy for Wynt; but his suspicions seemed to have reached

certainty at last and he was thoroughly angry, both on his own account and on Lee's. He had anxiety enough about Lee without cherishing a young fellow who was egging him on.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Havisham, but I wish to ask you, are you fond of games? billiards, for example?"

"Not of billiards, certainly. I do not play the game."

"Ah, you do not? Faro then, possibly, instead?"

"I know nothing whatever of that."

"And what amusements do you go out for when evening comes?"

"None, sir. I had no need when I was in my uncle's home; and I certainly have no time now, if I wished anything of the kind."

"Will you be good enough, then, to tell me what occasion you had to go up a certain flight of stairs near which I met you last night?"

Wynt was staggered. He had never thought of inquiry taking this form. Any questions bearing on his own actions he could meet and answer fearlessly; but this meant Lee.

A peculiar expression came into Mr. Brainerd's face as he watched Wynt's and waited for the silence to break.

Wynt wished he would break it himself, by almost anything else he could say; but evidently he would not.

There was nothing for it. He must answer. But what could he say? If he told the truth and said he went to drag some one else away, the next question was sure to be, who was that some one else? "I went there for no wrong purpose, Mr. Brainerd. That is all I can say."

The look in Mr. Brainerd's face deepened. "Ah! That's pleasant to hear, but it hardly answers my question, I am sorry to say. Perhaps you will explain what that purpose, right or wrong, may have been."

Wynt was silent again. Then he lifted his eyes quickly and steadily to the senior partner's face. "That I must ask you to excuse my doing, Mr. Brainerd, if you please. I had hoped you had confidence enough in me to take my word. But since you have not, and if in other points you are not satisfied, I should be glad if you would put some one else into my place."

"Would you?" And there was a sneering insinuation in the tone that cut Wynt to the quick. "It would be better for appearances if you should wait until that little trouble at the office is cleared up. It might look like running before the enemy, you know. No, I am not satisfied in other points, several of them. But if you can explain yourself as to your position last evening, and as to stolen conversations with Lee that are much disturbed by being intruded upon, I shall be glad to let minor points go. Perhaps

you will be ready to do so before to-morrow night."

That evening Wynt hardly knew what he was doing or saying to entertain Cyp. The first two or three hours must be given up to him always, and must be as much like the old happy times at home as was possible with the changes that had come.

A confused feeling and a dull, heavy weight that seemed pressing like lead and the burning sense of outraged self-respect piled together upon him were almost too much.

What was he going to do for Cyp now? And had he, Wynt Havisham, to stand before a charge of wrong and not defend himself?

It seemed to him the evening would never wear away. If it ever would! if he could get Cyp off, and give up this strain of talking and listening when he did not know what either Cyp or himself was talking about!

But it was over at last, and Cyp, who had been in an unusually fine flow of spirits, gave some drawings that the day had produced a whirl into the waste-basket, preparatory to going up stairs.

"Stop, Cyp! I'm going to save those," Wynt said mechanically, remembering he had made that resolution the night before. "I'm going to fill a portfolio."

Cyp laughed merrily. "Yes! Great treas-

ures wouldn't they be? All right. Where's your portfolio, then?"

"I don't know that I have any," Wynt answered, forcing himself once more; he was sorry he had brought up a fresh subject just now.

"Yes, you have." And Cyp ran to an odd East Indian structure, half desk, half writing-table, that stood at the end of the room. "Here! Don't you remember this?" and he produced the red, purple, and yellow portfolio that Wynt had reclaimed from Vivian.

Wynt said that would do, and held out his hand for it, hoping to bring things to a close.

"It's empty," pursued Cyp, holding it open and swinging the two halves apart, "empty and all ready. Unless," and he dropped on one knee and placed the portfolio on the other for a rummage, "unless there's something in this pocket right here."

"Pocket! There is n't any pocket in it, Cyp."

"Is n't there!" returned Cyp triumphantly. "I guess I know! I hunted it out one day long ago. It's a kind of secret, you see, right under this little slit. And there's something in it this time, too. How did it get there? I should like to know. There did n't use to be anything when I found it before."

"Give it to me, Cyp," said Wynt listlessly; he did not care about portfolios if he could once get Cyp off to bed.

He took it and looked curiously at the ingenious bit of deception that had kept the pocket from his notice all this time. Yes, there was a paper in it. He wondered if it were something that Mr. Wilkie had been missing all this time and should have had.

He drew it out; Cyp was waiting impatiently to get the portfolio back. He handed it to him; Cyp flourished over to the waste-basket with it, and Wynt unfolded the paper and glanced inside.

His uncle's handwriting! He started at the dear familiar look, but in another instant every vein seemed to be on fire with the thrill that was sweeping through him.

That was for one instant. The next he found himself stupidly, heavily, going over the first few lines. It seemed as if he could not read them. Was he sure he was right?

"What is it?" asked Cyp, coming back. "Is it any good?"

"I don't know. It's something for Mr. Wilkie. I'll take it to him to-morrow. Come, Cyp, I'm very tired. I'd really like it if you'll come up stairs."

Cyp followed him instantly. It was hardly fifteen minutes before he was in the land of dreams, but it seemed weeks to Wynt. He went down stairs repeating to himself, "*This* time they cannot say it is not plain. *This* time they cannot say it is not written out and signed. *This* is the

'last will' that he 'did not wish carried out.' Oh, why had he not told us where it was!"

He sat down at Cyp's table and spread open the paper, trying confusedly to make mind and thoughts take in what his eyes saw clearly before them.

"I knew I was right! I knew the changes were about one part of the thing. This gives everything to Vivian, everything—except the legacies to Bent and the rest, of course. I thought that was it. But I did not think," and he gave an involuntary little shudder, "I did not think he would leave *us* to her—Cyp and me! This is to make her our guardian, trusting her to 'consider our best interests' until we are of age."

He scarcely stirred as the next five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. Brainerd and Gray's, Cyp, Vivian, that miserable flight of stairs, all seemed pressing in one confused crowd together. What was it he was to try and do with them all? Was this going to bring anything new?

No, he did not see that it was. It would not put Cyp and himself back into the house, for Vivian, with the decision left to her, certainly would not place them there. And if she considered that their "best interests" lay elsewhere than at the gate cottage and the store, she would have said so before to-day.

So it was all the same. He must show this to Mr. Wilkie, of course, but Brainerd and Gray

were what really concerned him. He should have to leave there to-morrow; he could never implicate Lee. But was it possible he was to leave their employment, or any one's else, with the possibility of any reflection being cast upon his name!

He felt the blood rush burning hot into his face. How was he going to bear this, even for Lee? And what could he do for Cyp after that?

He looked idly down at the paper again, and started violently as he saw what had been blank before. How could he have been so blind? This did make a difference. This was the *last* will, dated only a few days before Judge Havisham was taken ill. And it was the "last will" that his uncle wished set aside! He had made it to keep a promise to Vivian; he regretted it; he struggled to his utmost to retract it when he felt that right had stronger claims than Vivian's wish.

It was all plain now. He did wish the first one to stand. He did wish the old house to be their home, and every generous provision to be made for them, as he would have made it had he lived.

Then they might go back to the house! Brainerd and Gray need be nothing to Wynt. He could go on with his studies and make himself what he wished, and Cyp's heart and eyes could grow bright together once more. The

fight need not be "hand to hand." There would be enough always without defrauding any one's right and without begging or borrowing on any hand.

A great whirling reaction rushed over Wynt and he leaned his head upon his hand. Cyp! Was Cyp to be all right?

It was for one moment, however, and the moment was short. The next brought a sudden sweep of awakening that dashed the cobwebs of this joyful dream away. He laughed an unnatural, excited little laugh.

"I should not like any one to tell me I was such a dunce!" he said, starting from his chair as if he wished to shake himself into his right mind. "I thought I had learned, once for all, that what a man wishes is not his will. The other had to stand, whether he said so or not; then so must this. This is written clearly, from beginning to end, and signed with his dear old name. No one can dispute that, if they wish. So Vivian will have her own way even more fully than now. That is, she will have the money Mr. Wilkie has taken in trust. But there is no danger of her wishing to change anything with us. We shall go on just the same of course.

"Only," and Wynt felt a sudden cry rising up in his heart, "the one single solid comfort and blessedness will be gone. I thought I was

doing right. I was so sure I was doing what uncle wished. Now I know I am not. I must fight along simply because I must, not for his sake.

"Well," he added, after a little time, "then the fight is the only question to meet. I've got it before me, sharp, and I wont forget that I *can* say it is for Cyp's sake, if no more. Now, then, it could n't be much thicker, I'm sure. I do n't see exactly which end to take hold of first. If there were to be one straw more—"

The words were hardly formed before he found that the "more" was there; not a straw, either, but a staggering, crushing temptation such as he had not thought could ever come to him. This will, that every one would say must stand, his uncle did not wish carried out. Then why should he take it to Mr. Wilkie? Why might it not lie for ever where it had been left? If he let it do so, he could take his inheritance left him by his uncle's heart and soul and very last true words, and life would be life to Cyp and himself the more. If he took it to Mr. Wilkie, things would be as the law said was right, but in every other way so bitterly wrong!

He stood gazing at the paper a moment, scarcely knowing what he saw. He put his hand to his forehead; he was so tired! Why should not he put the thing out of the way for ever and tell Mr. Wilkie he had changed his

mind—he would take what the acknowledged will gave him, for Cyp's sake and his own?

But that moment was shorter than the joyful one had been. He made a sudden gesture as if spurning something from him, and began to pace the floor. "Oh, where did that thought come from? It never could have been mine. It can't be that I could call wrong right, as Mr. Brainerd thinks I can. Life would be life, would it? It would be worse than death, you mean, Wynt Havisham, with a stain always to look at on your hands."

He stretched them out suddenly before him as if to some one whom he could reach. "Oh, my Lord Christ! Let me hold fast to thee! Hold me to thyself till I take a little rest. Life will be life always, with the right and my Lord held fast. Poor as I am, it has been richer to me lately than ever before. I shall be strong again to-morrow; only to-night I cannot seem to see!"

He turned to the table, took up the paper, folded it, and quietly returned it to the pocket where it had been found.

"Yes, I shall be all right to-morrow," he repeated, "if I only hold on. I don't see what makes me so tired to-night. I wouldn't go back and lose all my soul has learned out of these last six months for all a hundred wills could give me. I should think I was no older than Cyp. I shall be rich and strong and happy again when I've

had a night's sleep, ready to work like a man, and like more of a man than I was yesterday for the very fight.

"And I'll worry no more about Cyp nor about anything else. I am ashamed of myself. I know it's all right and will be right. The love Vivian tried to turn away from us was true as steel underneath all the time; but our Christ's is stronger even than that. No one can persuade *him* away from us for a single hour.

"Cyp's drawings will have to find something else to hold them. This portfolio must go down town the very first thing I attend to when to-morrow comes. Then Brainerd and Gray will have to be squared up to next."

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOLD? OR LET GO?

THE "night's sleep" came quietly and refreshingly to Wynt; his mind was made up. But it came late and went early with Mr. Wilkie, for his was in a tempest of torturing indecision and strain.

To-morrow he must meet definitely and once for all the question of working the lead-mine or letting it go. The decision must be made and sent to the point where it was waited for, and by it his own fortunes must stand or fall. His own faith was as strong as ever that through it might come relief, and relief not only from the trying position in which losses had placed him, but also from the rapid approach of a day when, through no fault of his own, heavy demands that he had no power to meet would be at the door.

The arguments he had met and battled with before arrayed themselves in full force, and the onset was stronger and stronger as the still hours of the night placed his own danger in blackest coloring before him.

The risk, if he were to meddle with money entrusted to him, was virtually, he might almost say absolutely, nothing. There could not be any

risk! A year, perhaps a few months even, would return it all with interest. It would be simply changing an investment. A trustee always had discretion to do that.

Then suddenly the whole question would reverse itself in his mind. Had not many another man done this very thing: handled money that he had no right to touch, feeling as sure as he did that all could be made right, and then found himself overwhelmed in worse than ruin by the discovery that his hopes had proved false? And was it not a thing he must do secretly, afraid even to let his right hand know what his left hand did? And was Hugh Wilkie a man to do what he dared not let the whole world see spread before their eyes?

But—and then came rushing back all the old torture and despair; and he rose in the morning haggard and worn. "It is a desperate thing," he said. "No one can judge a desperate man by common rules. I will do no one any harm. Who then can say that any man is wronged?" And he walked to his office with a contracted brow and a quick, determined step.

Wynt left the cottage a few moments later, with the portfolio and its replaced contents in his hand. He wondered how he could have felt so tempest-tossed about it. He had only to go on now exactly as he had been going on before, except for the loss of his assurance that he was following his

uncle's wish. That was a blow, it was true, and it was a blow to find Mr. Brainerd could suspect him of a wrong; but with his own heart and conscience clear he should be all right. If worst came to worst, he could tell Mr. Wilkie in confidence why he was on those horrid stairs. He would never betray Lee. And so long as Mr. Wilkie trusted him it was little matter what Mr. Brainerd thought. Life was open to him just as much for all that—a manly, honorable, straightforward life, working for Cyp, respecting himself, useful to other people, and enjoying everything and everybody as he went, so far as they could be enjoyed.

"And holding fast to my Leader at the same time; that's the best of it," he added mentally. "It's a pleasant feeling that you're in the hands of a Prince like him. 'A man's a man' when he can feel that, though he knows he's the smallest soldier in the list. And as for 'blows,' it's a poor soldier that can't take a few as his campaign goes."

He closed the cottage door and passed out into the driveway, when he saw Bent just ahead, standing as if waiting for him. He would almost rather not be detained just now, but he turned towards him with a kindly word.

"I've scarcely had a 'how d' ye' with you for a month, Bent," he said. "And you did not tell me any news after that letter either, the other

day. I don't seem to have many spare minutes, between the store and Cyp. Is Mab all right?"

"Yes, Mr. Wynt, she always is, I believe, but she's doing even a little extra lately, strange as it may seem—ever since Dr. McPherson has been coming to see her, thanks to you. I thought at first it was partly his raising her spirits; but it couldn't have been that, since she seems to be keeping it up steady, and her spirits have had a hard pull to take them down of late."

"What do you mean, Bent?" asked Wynt hastily. "Have you been keeping back any trouble from me?"

"Well, sir, I thought I wouldn't speak of it till I must. I thought maybe some way out of it would appear. But it doesn't seem so, and I thought I'd better let you know that Miss Vivian thinks to come in April, and—" Bent hesitated.

"What is it, Bent? You mustn't keep things back—things that trouble you, I mean. Suppose she does come? You'll like having the house full again, of course."

"I might, sir, if it were to make any difference to me. But I believe my day is done in the old house. Miss Vivian will bring a new butler with her, she says."

Wynt started as if he had been shot. "A new butler! Are you in your senses, or am I out of mine? What are you talking about? You're a part of the house itself."

"That 's just the trouble, as I'm sure she looks at it, Mr. Wynt. An old house can be furbished up, but an old man can't. A younger butler will bring more style with him for her, you know."

Wynt did not know whether it was a little groan or an outcry of indignation that escaped him as he looked at Bent and felt in a moment that it must be true. Bent had not made a mistake; it was too like Vivian. And yet he would not have thought *this*, even of her.

"And how long have you known this, Bent?" he asked.

"Since the letter you saw with me the other day. I thought you were pressed upon enough, and too much by far, for that matter, and I would not be bringing my troubles to you so long as I could keep them off. I hoped to find some one who *would* want an old man; but Miss Vivian does n't seem altogether by herself. She 's quite right about it, as I 'm beginning to see."

"Right!" exclaimed Wynt between his teeth. "And April is almost here!"

"Yes, sir. That 's why I thought it time to speak of it, so that you might be expecting her. We shall have to leave the cottage, there 's no doubt, and it will be hard to see less of you. It 's your coming past and in and out, and Mr. Cyp's, that keeps the breath of the old days alive."

"It can't be! She would not take the cottage

from you and Mab! If she does, Cyp and I will stampede from Barbie's and leave you there. That will leave Mab all right. No one can take Barbie's house away from her while she lives, you know, and I think she's good for a long stretch yet. But how have you been standing it all?"

Bent smiled quietly, but the smile went to Wynt's heart. "Well, sir, there's only one way, you know. Mab's had her lessons in it and learned them well, but it took me longer to get quite settled in my mind. You can't break Mab down any way, you know; she wont let go. She was nearer to it, for a little time, in that matter of Jem than I've seen her before or since; but her courage is strong this time. She's got fast hold. It pains her sharp for me that I got such a wound; but she's sure our Lord has it all at heart. And I can't be less sure with her before me; so we're all right."

Wynt got Bent's hand between both his with a grip. "Bent, you'll never be an old man to me. I'll have a house of my own some day, and the moment I do you're in it, if it's only twenty feet square."

He went on with the consciousness of a keen new pain that put the questions pressing a moment before quite out of sight. "Bring a new butler with her! Bent has n't lost an inch in the last ten years; I've heard uncle say so many a

time. And I believe he would have turned round and waited upon the old fellow, himself, rather than send him adrift like this. He trusted him to Vivian, as he did us. I believe he will know it in heaven if she really does this thing."

But hot feeling makes quick walking, and he was soon nearing the block which held the store and the law-office at once.

What was Jem hovering about the store door for? It looked as if he were another one waiting for a talk. He was fidgeting a little about some freight; but Wynt could see there was nothing in that.

He came up with him in a moment and found himself right. Jem stepped forward and met him, with a lift of his cap.

"I was waiting to speak with you, sir, if I could have a word. I wont keep you a moment, but there 's something I 'd like to say."

"All right, Jem," answered Wynt, although inwardly wondering if this was to be another "stolen interview" laid up by the senior partner to his score.

"I just want to say, sir, that I can't get along with it another day—not with the feeling that I 'm standing out against a girl like Mab, I mean. I would n't give in to it when you first pointed it out; not a peg. She 'd wounded me sore, I thought, though I 've seen plain enough since that it was I had the whole wrong of it,

after all. But I could n't bring myself to give in, the more shame, and I kept repeating 't would be no use if I did; she could never make up."

"But you 're ready now, Jem?" asked Wynt eagerly.

"Yes, sir; I've watched you in the meantime, and I've seen and knowed more than you thought, and it's broken me down altogether at last, noting your going on. I've seen how you could take a wrong, and a mean one too, many a time, and how you just kept yourself true as a man, whatever any other might say or do. I've knowed you far above me always, as a gentleman, and been content to let it be so as we were born; but it's as open to me as to you to be a man, and a true one, and I could n't rest. I'm driven to follow on, though it'll be long enough before I overtake.

"So I'm just going to Mab to tell her so. She never did me any wrong, nor could n't, and I'm not fit for her; but I'll make myself nearer to it as time goes on. So if she'll stoop to take me back, as lover or friend, it's all I ask. And if there's anything worth her taking she owes it to you, and that's all I have to say."

"And a great deal too much, Jem. I do n't know what you 're talking about, as far as I'm concerned. Of course you can be as much of a man as I am, and more; for you can keep your place in the world, and I'm not sure that I can.

But as for Mab, I'm thankful you've come to the right of it at last. And you could n't have brought light into a much darker sky this morning. Fly off to her, Jem! Do n't let the grass grow under your feet. Do you know they're in a peck of trouble up there? You'll find chance enough to make up for the past."

What was Mr. Wynt saying? Mab and Bent were in trouble? Jem sprang upon the wagon and shook the reins over the horse's back. He had an errand for the store in the direction of Havisham gate, and had been planning to save out a few minutes for Mab by haste. He could not make haste enough now!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TURNED INTO DAY.

WYNT went quickly up the office stairs, for he had time to make up as well as Jem. But his step was as light as it was quick; there was one big ray of light coming in, at least. Bent and Mab would get some comfort in their trouble after all.

He opened the door quietly; there was no one inside. Mr. Wilkie must be in his private room. He was almost sure to be in at this hour in the day.

Wynt went on to the next door, which was closed, and knocked. There was an instant's hesitation, a sound of closing and locking a drawer, and then a quick "Come in."

Wynt opened the door and stepped inside. Mr. Wilkie sat at his desk with a look that struck Wynt as not quite his own—excited and a little disturbed.

"Oh, I'm sure I'm interrupting you," he said. "Let me come in again. There are so many more important things. Mine can wait. I can leave it here."

"No, no," said Mr. Wilkie, with an unconscious glance towards the locked drawer. "I'm

glad to see you. Pleasant subjects exchanged for unpleasant ones, you know;" and he laughed a little, but, as Wynt thought once more, in not quite his natural way.

In another moment, however, he had collected himself and was turning to Wynt with almost his own easy friendliness. "You 're an early bird this morning," he said. "You ought to catch something worth having. What are you doing with that portfolio? It 's the one you cleared the papers out of for me once, is it not?"

"It is the one I thought I cleared out, Mr. Wilkie. But it has its secrets, it seems, like some other things, and Cyp hunted this out for us, this thin little pocket that I never once noticed before."

"And there is something in it?"

"Yes," answered Wynt quietly; and he drew out the paper and handed it to the lawyer.

Mr. Wilkie took it, glanced at it, and uttered an exclamation sudden and strong. It was no trouble for him to take in the whole thing as it had been for Wynt. He saw it all in an instant, and in the signature as well as the whole handwriting there lay no possibility of doubt. The judge seemed risen before him in the clear, peculiar characters that almost spoke.

He looked quickly and keenly into Wynt's face, then for an instant at the paper again. "Well, Wynt," he said, fixing his eyes on his

visitor, "this tells a tale. We know now what was the 'last will' your uncle wanted to knock over at the eleventh hour. What do you think of this?"

"To tell the truth, Mr. Wilkie, on one account I'd rather it had not been found."

"You would, upon my word! May I ask why?"

"Because it takes away the great satisfaction I had in knocking along where I am. I thought it was where he wanted us to be; or that he did not want us where the other will would have put us, at least. But now that's all upset and gone. He wanted us in the old home and with all that his generous love could provide for us. We shall go along just the same of course, Cyp and I, but I shall not have the comfort of thinking that I am true to him."

"Ah! That is the 'one account' on which you wish it were not found. Are there others on which you, on the other hand, congratulate yourself?"

"There is one other that almost balances the first. No one can ever say now that *he* was not true to *us* to the very last. Vivian had persuaded him into a mistake for a few days, but that was all. The moment he saw it, it was undone."

"Ah!" said Mr. Wilkie again, with his eye fastened upon the paper now and not seeming to

see Wynt. "And may I ask again, why is it 'of course' that you and Cyp 'will go along just the same'?"

Wynt began to grow almost impatient. He was not sure he cared to be catechised to this extent, and Mr. Wilkie surely had drilled him into recognizing the fact that a will duly written and signed must rule by law.

"Because," he said, "by your own teaching, Mr. Wilkie, my uncle's wish to set aside his will is nothing. The will itself must stand. This one leaves everything to Vivian and to her consideration, and she considers that we are very suitably settled where we are."

A slight gleam of a smile showed itself about Mr. Wilkie's mouth, but it was gone again. "You are a good law student, Wynt. You have learned all I taught you and I hope to teach you more. But now just one question—that is to say, if I'm not keeping you too long. Are you in haste?"

Wynt hesitated. "Only that I should be late at the store."

"Well, I'll only detain you a moment. This will, we see plainly, is the one your uncle regretted and wished to destroy. Has it occurred to you that if you were, accordingly, to destroy it, or simply let it lie where it is, you could accept your full inheritance from the other with no wrong done to the testator, but the contrary in fact?"

Wynt flushed violently. "Oh, why do you ask me such a question? I don't even know that you have a right to ask it. Yes! The thought did 'occur' to me! That's exactly what it did. It was none of my seeking. I hated it when it came and got rid of it as fast as possible."

"Ah! And did it take you long?"

"No, it did not. I knew this paper to be a matter that belongs to the law and to Vivian. I had no business to meddle with it. What do you take me for? Mr. Brainerd does not half believe in me. What right have people to talk to me in such a way?"

Mr. Wilkie drew his mouth in form for a whistle, but it could scarcely be heard. "Well, then, Wynt, I suppose you see, of course, that if you are settled down under this thing there can be no change. As things were before you had only to face about, any day, and say you had had enough."

"I see it, of course."

"But it seems to me you are carrying a pretty heavy load for a man of your age. There are some things that press quite a little, if I don't mistake."

"Yes. One of them is that Mr. Brainerd has put a test matter before me where I can't yield, and the alternative is he will request me to walk out. I think I ought to mention it to you."

The whistle came now, clear and strong, but

Mr. Wilkie only looked at the paper on the desk. "That might make it troublesome for you to get in anywhere else."

"Yes."

There was a moment's silence.

"And Cyp? McPherson tells me he thinks Cyp does not take to his new life in a way exactly for his health."

Wynt started. Oh, why did Mr. Wilkie bring that up? Why must he torture him at that one tenderest point of all? "I'd lay down my life for Cyp, Mr. Wilkie, as I think you very well know, but I think he would lay down his rather than have his brother build it up for him on a wrong. It would not be worth much to either of us after that."

Silence again.

"And what do you propose to do then?"

Wynt hesitated once more. Why should he feel annoyance at questions Mr. Wilkie had thought best to ask? He had his reasons, no doubt. They *had* stirred him up horridly just after he had got the whole thing off his mind, but still—and he looked back at Mr. Wilkie with one of his old quick, gleaming smiles.

"There's only one thing I can do, Mr. Wilkie. I must just 'hold on the tighter the harder things pull.' That's a saying Cyp got off by accident one day and it seems to stick in the family conscience."

"Ah! And what do you propose to hold on to?"

"To the right, and by His help to the one Friend who never urges me to let go of it. I don't quite understand you, Mr. Wilkie, to-day. Why do you talk to me about doing a wicked wrong?"

In an instant Mr. Wilkie had sprung to his feet and was grasping Wynt by the hand. "I beg your pardon, Wynt. I owe you that, but you have not understood me, it is true. I wanted to probe you to the depth, that was all, and find what was there, for your sake and mine at once. I have found it, and I am satisfied. I thought it would do me good, and it has. I owe you more than to beg your pardon, and I will pay it if I ever can. God forbid that I should talk to you in earnest about a wrong.

"Now, then, we are ready. Let me have the happiness of blotting out even the memory of all this. You're a good law student, as I told you, Wynt; but, as I promised, let me teach you one thing more. This will is good for nothing, and simply leaves you free to consider the other as the expression of your uncle's true desire. You forgot, perhaps, that the testator's signature, even, is valueless in a case like this without witnesses and seals. Judge Havisham knew that, and I doubt not left the paper thus unfinished because he could not up to that time quite bring his

heart to validate it. His last words to you were, unquestionably, to assure you, when this will should be found, that his love and faithfulness to you and Cyp had proved stronger than a promise wrung from him in an unguarded hour. He had fulfilled his promise; he had made another will. But he had as true a right to revoke the second as the first, if a later choice outbalanced it.

"You can take your inheritance freely, Wynt, without fear that you do any man wrong, and without the pain of feeling your uncle did one, to you or any one on earth. You can take care of Cyp—put him into the old house to-morrow—and you can march down and mention to Brainnerd and Gray that you want nothing more on that floor. I am going to move you up one flight and keep you with me."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REPARATION.

WYNT left Mr. Wilkie much more quietly than Mr. Wilkie passed the next half-hour by himself.

The first ten minutes were spent in pacing the floor of his inner office excitedly, the door tightly closed. Occasionally he glanced towards the locked drawer with an expression of horror and triumph strangely mixed.

"That boy has saved me from more than he will ever know! That *man*, I might rather say, but seventeen though he is. I begin to think following that 'Lord Christ' of his makes a man out of any age. 'Holding on to the right' and to that unseen Leader and Friend, was he? 'Holding on tighter the harder things pulled.' It must have taken all that to keep him where he's been. And I—" he glanced towards the desk again—"I was mightily near to letting go! I wouldn't have answered for myself an hour longer; and what then? Was Hugh Wilkie to have gone about 'building on a wrong,' and that wrong tumbling over on his head some day, possibly, beside? Thank God, and thank Wynt Havisham, that temptation is past for ever! It

can have no more power than ashes over me again."

He unlocked the drawer, took out the papers that had been so near helping him towards a stained integrity, and carried them back to the safe, the look of triumph even stronger in his face. He was Hugh Wilkie again now, but Hugh Wilkie knowing himself better than he had before known him.

His stern love of uprightness, his honor, his self-respect, he had thought they never could be touched. But they had been touched, and they had bent almost far enough to consent that wrong was right! And if they had done so once, could he assure himself for all time that danger would not come again? Should he not rather reach out to that unseen Hand Wynt anchored to and try "holding on" there? And had Hugh Wilkie, after all, ever been the true man he had thought himself, refusing allegiance to the Leader who had lived and died for him?

Wynt meanwhile had walked quietly into his place again and gone to work, pen in hand. The book-keeper was even later than himself this morning, and Wynt would not speak a word to Mr. Brainerd, if he could help it, until that error had been found.

It must be found very soon now, he was sure. Almost everything had been looked over. It could not take much more time.

After that, however, he did not care what came. Brainerd and Gray? If they wished questions answered that he chose to decline, what then?

He was not sure going into Mr. Wilkie's office was the best thing. He was young for that yet. Work was not hurting him. Why should he not stay where he was, if the firm wanted him? If they did not, all right. He knew himself too well for their opinion to trouble him. Mr. Wilkie had evidently scorned any imputation they could bring.

These thoughts only passed through his mind disjointedly among a crowd of others that came sweeping in, while under them and through them and over them thrilled his strange, great joy.

How was it possible everything had come right at once?

He need never even ask himself what his uncle's love had been. Cyp was all right! He, Wynt, could choose his own work now and go about it steadily, without being torn every way with questions as to whether it was all right for Cyp. And they had a share in the old home, "every beam and rafter of it," as his uncle had said. Vivian might feel as she pleased; he could walk through it, every floor of it, feeling like a man.

And Jem had been to Mab! And Bent? He

started suddenly. Possibly, if he and Cyp went into the house, there might be a difference about Bent.

The figures lay before him and his eye kept close upon them, but his work did not go on very fast. That would not do. He must steady things down better than that.

The book-keeper came in and the morning moved almost silently on. Warnock passed the office now and then, and Wynt could feel, without raising his eyes, that a very meaning look was upon his face.

"It will be a relief if I leave here," Wynt thought, "not to see him any more. Somehow the sight of that man makes my soul sick."

Warnock, meanwhile, upon his part, was indulging in some reflections equally pleasing to himself. His plans in Wynt's direction seemed nearing their climax at last. It would not take more than this day, he felt sure, to reward him for all he had so patiently tried to work out. In his elation he forgot that it is not wise to let approaching triumph throw one off his guard.

"Where's Havisham?" Lee asked, from another part of the store where he had been kept that day. "Has he come in?"

"Yes, I believe he has," answered Warnock, unable to restrain himself and with an expression that he tried to conceal. "It is to be hoped he's making good use of his time while he stays."

"What do you mean?" asked Lee, facing about suddenly.

"Oh, not much. Only," and the sneer deepened visibly, "perfection 's not perfection always, and the firm are getting a few things against the young man's score, I think."

In an instant he saw that he had gone too far. He had overreached himself; he had "given himself away."

"If they are, it 's a false score, then," retorted Lee almost fiercely; "and more than that, I know who has been working it up for him, too."

He stopped for one withering look, and then, almost before Warnock knew what had happened, had left him behind and was at the private office door.

"Come in," said Mr. Brainerd's voice, and Lee stepped before him with an excited face.

"I beg your pardon! I hear there has been a 'score running up' against Havisham."

Mr. Brainerd's look of surprise was followed by a peculiar smile. "He told you so himself, probably. He thought you could help him out."

"No; he did not. It was told me by some one who knows more than he should about it, I'm very sure. Are you willing to tell me what the charges are? They are false as darkness, whoever brought them on."

Mr. Brainerd's face darkened. "You are get-

ting too warm, young man. Perhaps I am a better judge of sources of information than you. And in this case the special 'score,' as you are pleased to call it, is not marked by any 'charge,' but by something that I saw, fortunately or unfortunately, myself."

"Do you mean to say that you ever saw Havisham in any wrong?"

Mr. Brainerd hesitated. He was accustomed to sit as questioner, not as questioned, in his room. And yet was there not an opportunity here to give Lee a very desirable warning that he might otherwise miss? If Havisham should by any possibility come round with a fair explanation, and chose to keep silent about the affair towards Lee, he would not hear of it.

"You ask altogether too much explanation, sir; you forget yourself, as I reminded you before. But I will tell you one thing for your good. When I see a young man coming down a very questionable flight of stairs, with entertainment at the top of them that is kept scrupulously in the shade, and if he declines most positively to tell me what interest took him there, I have no more use for him in my employ. Our relations end then and there."

Lee stood for one moment looking fixedly at him without a word. His father had seen Wynt coming down that night? Wynt had declined to tell him what he went there for? Had that been

going on all this time, with no suspicion of it coming to him?

"I see you understand me," Mr. Brainerd added, gratified to perceive that an impression had evidently been made. "That is all that is necessary to be said upon the subject then."

Lee started and seemed to know where he was again suddenly. "I beg your pardon, sir. There is something further, if you please. If Wynt will not tell you what 'interest' took him up those stairs, I will. Why has all this been kept back from me? It was *my* interest. And yours too, so far as you care what becomes of me. He went there, as far as the top step at least, because he caught my face at the window, like the idiot I am. He went to drag me away and get me to make a man of myself again. He did not succeed; but he put himself on ground he despised and hated, to try for it. And that is what he was trying when Warnock caught us together, and has tried ever since he came into the store. If I'd been worth the tenth of his little finger, he'd have conquered me long ago. But he's broken me all up now. I'll try to make myself worth that tenth, if no more. You will have no further trouble with me, sir, if I see myself turning to mummy, stock, and stone in this store."

Mr. Brainerd listened to this excited harangue, more bewildered, if possible, than Lee had been a few moments before. What was the boy saying?

It was to shield him that Wynt had kept silence, at the risk of disgrace to himself? And he had been trying to reclaim Lee all the time, working at him as if the task belonged to him? And could a boy like this — was it likely that any other of Warnock's insinuations against him could have had fair ground?

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and the book-keeper looked in. "I beg pardon. I'd like just to say that I've come on that error at last; my own, as I had no doubt it was. A slight one, but very careless, and upsetting a good many things, of course."

Lee watched his father's face as he heard what was said, while his own reflections ran thus: "Very good! And it was near upsetting one thing more than the book-keeper thought of too, I rather think. There's been a burning shame somewhere, and Warnock's at the bottom of it, I'm more than sure."

Mr. Brainerd would have been ready to agree with Lee if he had spoken aloud. There *had* been "a burning shame somewhere," and he could only reproach himself mercilessly that he had been so easily blinded, allowing himself to be prejudiced where not a single fact could be made to stand as foundation for a charge.

And as if that was not enough, here was Lee! Havisham had been doing and sacrificing everything for him, and what was Lee saying? That

Brainerd and Gray were to have no more trouble with him?

"Lee, you are quite sure you are right? There is no mistake in all this? in what you think you know about Havisham?" Mr. Brainerd asked, turning towards his son as the bookkeeper closed the door.

"None, except that I don't know half the high soul there's in him! I can't, it's so far above mine. But I'm going to fight along after it, as well as in me lies, and see if I can make myself fit to fasten his shoe. Don't say a word to me about it, though. Wait till I can show you some proof."

Mr. Brainerd hesitated. The mere words without the proof gave him greater happiness than he had felt for many a disheartened day. Still, if Lee wished it, perhaps it was better not to touch him with even a congratulation just now.

"I'll watch for your proof then thankfully, Lee," was accordingly all he said. "Now go, and send me Mr. Warnock, if you 'll be so good."

The summons was quickly answered.

"Warnock, go and bring Mr. Havisham here; I will see you together, if you please."

The clerk obeyed instantly; his moment had come at last! But there was one thing that had struck his ear very strangely, nevertheless—that

transposing of the "Mr." that belonged before his name.

"Now for it!" thought Wynt, as the face he always liked to avoid seeing looked into the office with a hidden triumph in its smile. "I hope neither of them will say anything that self-respect can't pass unnoticed; that's all. I shall never answer that question, whatever comes."

Warnock had slipped out of sight again hastily after delivering his message, and was standing by Mr. Brainerd's chair when Wynt reached the room. Wynt met his eyes steadily for an instant and then turned to the head of the firm.

"You wished to see me, I believe?"

Mr. Brainerd rose, came forward, and held out his hand. "Yes, Mr. Havisham, I do. I wish to beg your pardon for any unjust suspicion or unkindness I may have held towards you or made you feel. I have done you great wrong, while you were sacrificing yourself for a noble service to my boy and me. I regret it extremely, and I wish to tell you so and to thank you most earnestly for what you have done. It is not necessary to explain. Lee has done that for us. And I wish also to say that the error in the books proves to be no responsibility of yours, and that if you will do us the favor to remain with us, I will see that you are treated as you and your services deserve.

"And I wish to beg of you, sir," Mr. Brainerd

went on, turning to Warnock, whom he had left quite at the rear, "that in future you will be kind enough, if you wish to serve as tale-bearer, to bring me no insinuations that you cannot sustain with facts; especially where facts enough might have been discovered, had you chosen, to call for highest praise. I have found it difficult to reconcile your views with the value every one else in the store sets upon Mr. Havisham's work. I hope," turning to Wynt again, "you will overlook all this and go on as if it had not occurred."

The little speech to Warnock had given Wynt time to recover himself from the utter astonishment the first moment had brought, while Warnock stood livid with suppressed sensations and without a word.

"You are very kind, Mr. Brainerd—too kind, I am afraid. I do not quite understand all you have been so good as to say, except that you begin to feel that you can trust me, and that is all I ask. As to remaining, I will do so with pleasure if—that is to say, I can give my decision better in a few days, if that will be quite convenient to you."

But the next moment an absurd feeling came over him. If he said that and nothing more, Mr. Brainerd might suspect he was getting on his stilts and holding off for injured dignity. "And my dignity feels more hurt at hearing him apolo-

gize to me than at almost anything else," he exclaimed to himself.

"I beg your pardon," he added hastily, "it is better to be frank. I'm not quite sure what is due to other people yet. I've been leaving that brother of mine too much, for one thing, I've been afraid; and a new discovery as to my uncle's plans for us makes that quite unnecessary now. And I believe Mr. Wilkie has some wish that I should study the next year; but if I go on with work anywhere, I will do so here, with pleasure, since you are kind enough to think I can be of use."

Warnock's eyes were wide open upon Wynt now and his face almost beyond his power of control. He made some confused murmur about being needed outside; Mr. Brainerd said, "Certainly;" and he disappeared.

"Then I have more to congratulate you upon than I thought for, Havisham," said Mr. Brainerd as he watched Warnock out of sight. "I found I had to do so upon being a man and keeping yourself one under trying times; but if all those matters are going to turn out happily and give you a few years' respite to catch up with yourself, I shall do so doubly and with all my heart. Now go and find Lee somewhere. You can have all the talks in the packing-room you may like."

CHAPTER XXXV.

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

WYNT did not feel that he wanted to do as Lee's father suggested. "I don't know what the fellow can have been going on about in there," he said to himself as he walked towards his own work. "If he's been praising me, or talking of anything he thinks I've tried to do for him, as he's big-hearted enough to do, why, I can't go and follow him up about it, of course. That's what it would look like. But I *should* like to have him tell me that he knows I did not give him away."

He did not have long to wait. Lee watched his opportunity, when the book-keeper had stepped out, and came rushing up to Wynt's stool, almost dragging him round upon it, until he could look into his face.

"Wynt," he said, as he stood before him with his head erect, "you'll never see me skulking off where you can't follow me again, nor pretending to myself or any one else that a contemptible life is an endurable one. I knew all the time that I was acting abominably, but I would not tell myself so. But you've got the whip hand

of me now! You 've just broken me up at last. I 'm ashamed to the depths of my soul, but I 'm proud of myself for being ashamed. It puts the breath of a man into me already. And as for what I think of you, you would n't let me say a hundredth part of it if I could. But if you can forgive me and endure me while I 'm trying to straggle after you, fifty miles off, it 's all I ask."

Wynt looked at him, confused between what he understood and what he made nothing of. Was Lee declaring himself "broken up" at last? Was that one more great happiness coming into this strange day?

But the rest of it all—how he could have anything to do with it—that he did not comprehend.

"I do n't know what you are talking about, Lee, as far as I am concerned; but for your own part of it—I thought this day was about as full as it could be, but you are putting the best and the biggest drop into the cup. And you mean it; I 'm sure of that."

"Yes, I mean it; but if you do n't know what I 'm trying to say about you, I 'll tell you. I 'm talking about what you 've done, and been, and tried to do for me ever since I began to make a fool of myself, and what I 've seen you making of yourself, ever since you got thrown on your own feet; and there was no 'soft thing' about that, as everybody knows. And I 'm talking about your taking your chance, and a heavy one, of a bounce

from Brainerd and Gray, rather than give me away."

"How did you know anything about that?"

"Never mind; I knew it, and I don't forget it while I live. And now, if you can stand it, I'm going to hang to you till I see if I can learn the *a*, *b*, *c* of what I admire with all my soul in you."

"Don't, Lee. I can't take that kind of talk from you. Do you think I can't see what's noble and good on your side, if you'll only let it come to the top? As to Brainerd and Gray—it would have made no difference with me, anyway, as it proved; so that doesn't count. And as to 'learning' from me, there's nothing to learn, that I know of, unless it's the very shadow of what I ought to have learned myself a hundred times better than I have from your Lord and mine. Why don't you 'hang' to him? There's no other help like it; and if you want anything really worth worshipping, there's where you have to look."

Lee shook his head. "*He* couldn't stand it! I haven't got the stuff in me that He wants to see coming to Him. It's all I can do to brace up and believe you're going to take any stock in me after this. I do believe it, but I'll have to stop there. And I don't go into things of that kind, anyway, you know."

"Well now, Lee, what's the use of a lot of

talk that don't hang together better than that? You believe I'm ready to 'take stock in you,' because your faults never spoiled my friendship, because I've 'preached to you,' as you've been pleased to call it, half a dozen times, and because I tried to drag you off a flight of stairs. And when our Prince became our Elder Brother, and went through a long thirty years of it here, struggling against everything, to show us what a life might be, and finally laid down his own to redeem us and to give us a fresh start, you talk about not having the right kind of stuff in you to bring to him! I wouldn't like you to treat me like that; and *he* doesn't. If you want to get rid of the evil that's in you, as something you hate and despise, and if you begin to see the good and glorious he has shown us, and want to get hold of it, that's the very kind of 'stuff' he's been waiting and watching for you to bring to him all this time, and you know it as well as I. Why don't you go and talk to *him* about it? You'll find out for yourself then."

Lee hesitated. "Oh, come, Wynt! You're getting way ahead. I don't think I care about all that."

"Yes, you do care about it, too; or if you don't, the more reason still to tell him so. You wont be a true man and a thorough one while you're thankless to the Prince that became one to show you how; and if you want to be one, you'd

better 'hold on' to him, to make sure of it, and to have him show you a hundred times higher places in it than you or I have found out yet. And as to 'standing it,' he's had forgiveness piled up in his heart waiting for you longer than you seem to think of, many a time. I don't see how the same fellow that comes here and gives me a hundred times more than any little service I've been able to do him deserves, can finish by saying he does n't care about *Him!* I wish you 'd go and talk to Him about it, I say, and see where you 'd find yourself then. There 's enough there to 'break you all up,' if there isn't anywhere else, and he'll open your eyes if you want him to. And now don't say I've been preaching. I want you along with me where I am; and *he* wants you along with him too."

The morning passed at last; it seemed to Wynt it had packed a whole year into its hours; but the thing now was to go and tell Cyp. He must come next; and it would pay up for a thousand hard pulls to see him when he heard he was to go back into the old house!

But he did not come next, after all. Wynt met Bent as he turned into the yard, and in two minutes more Mab's heart stood actually still as she saw her father come hurrying in with a quick, unsteady step, and throwing his arms and head down upon the table, sit by it sobbing and crying like a little child.

"Don't mind me, Mab!" he managed to say, with a little gesture to put her away as she tried to come to him; "let me have it out. It's all joy, and don't shorten it. I shall never cry for joy again while I live."

Mab stood, tremulous with excitement, beside him without a word; but she could not bear it long. "But I never saw you this way, father, before," she ventured to say at last.

Bent looked up suddenly. "No, nor ever will again, Mab, not even when I see you well and married to Jem. See!" and he caught her in his arms and carried her back to her chair with a sweep; "am I an 'old man' now? I could carry you round this room a thousand times, for a feather's weight! I've gone back twenty years. It's the first will that's to stand, Mab! It's a second one, promised to Miss Vivian, that's to be tipped over with a breath. You'll see our young gentlemen back in the house they were born to, with inheritance proper to keep it, before one week has gone over our heads! You'll see Havishams in the Havisham House, Mab; and no one can say that the last who went out of it did those left behind a wrong. Miss Vivian may bring her new butler when she likes. With you and Jem made up, and all this set right, I can die in peace." And Bent began to walk the floor excitedly.

Mab had listened from beginning to end of his rapid outpouring without a word, the pink

color coming up more and more strongly into her cheeks and her eyes shining unutterable things.

She put out her hands at last and got hold of Bent's coat-sleeve, and he came within reach. "Are n't you glad you 'held on the tighter the harder things pulled'?" she asked with an archness that Bent used to delight in, but that sorrowful days had almost put out of sight.

"Glad! There 's only shame to me if there was ever a moment when I let go. And now, do you understand me, Mab? you 'll not see one of those boys carrying burdens heavy for a strong man's back, and the other breaking down with what 's too much for the heart of any child, not to mention a sensitive soul like Mr. Cyp's. I do n't know how we 're ever to thank the Lord for this day, with all it has brought us between daylight and now; and we have him to thank; that is one thing settled and sure."

There was a sound at the door, and Barbie's tall figure stood before them, erect, almost majestic, her eyes beaming like stars and the white head-handkerchief once more in stately folds about her head, while her brown hands hung before her clasped and motionless.

"Yes, for He seeth the end from the beginning," she began, as if echoing Bent's last words, in the slow, half-chanting tones she had learned in her childhood's land. "Darkness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning, and

clouds and shadows shall flee away. For He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure; and afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ALL RIGHT AT LAST.

Cyp had not taken the news at all as Wynt imagined he would. After his first start of surprise he stood still for one instant, as if to get hold of himself, and then covered everything with the same little swell that had amused Mr. Wilkie so much.

"Yes; I told you uncle never meant to throw us over. I said no one could ever make me believe he did. If he had, I could have stood it as well as you. I don't need to have a soft thing of it, of course. But I couldn't stand it to have them say it was uncle's fault, all the same!"

And "all the same," too, when Wynt went up stairs that night, he found Cyp asleep with red rings showing just a trifle under his eyes. He and Bent had both had their little season of tempestuous crying for joy.

The next thing was to write to Vivian.

"I want to march you into that house without a day lost," Mr. Wilkie said to Wynt, "on that youngster's account. McPherson has been working himself up a good deal about him of late. But I don't wish to do it till I've had the pleasure of announcing you to Mrs. Adriance, and Cyp

can make something out of anticipation, meantime. And I call writing to Mrs. Vivian a 'pleasure' deliberately, I want you to understand. I'll not pretend to myself, even, that it is not. To show her exactly how near she came to getting what she wanted, and missed it! that is all. I'll write her a copy of that 'last will,' if she wishes; or what would you say to letting her have the original, Wynt?"

But Wynt shook his head at Mr. Wilkie. Vivian had always been very kind in her manner to him, he said; at which Mr. Wilkie's moustache showed some peculiar little contortion going on under it, and he sat down to his letter forthwith.

Vivian's reply came immediately, the first return mail bringing it, sealed, square-lettered, and elegant, and written in all graceful apparent ease.

She was very glad, she said, that anything had occurred to induce Wynt to lay aside his prejudice against remaining in the Havisham House. She hoped he and Cyp would return at once and feel quite at home there, especially as she intended to sail, within a few days, for a two or three years' stay abroad. The old servants being so faithful and at home in their duties, she did not doubt her young cousins would find themselves so well taken care of as scarcely to miss her until her return; and with an airy little message of farewell to them the letted closed.

Mr. Wilkie threw the letter down upon his desk and leaned back in his chair with a little shout, half merriment, half satisfaction.

"Well, if there is n't a consummate little piece of letter-writing for you!" he exclaimed. "Vivian has outdone herself this time, certainly. And she could not have pleased me better if that had been her first object in life. If I had put those boys in there with her, they would have found her exactly the charming company she was before. And they could not have asked any one else to come and do the thing differently. Going abroad for two or three years, is she? Then I 'll just send and see if Mrs. Lewyn can be persuaded to come and warm the old house up for the youngsters for that time. Just about the measure her husband has given to Manilla, if I do n't mistake."

He wrote the letter, as his custom was, close on the heels of his decision. Matters were not apt to cool, very often, on Mr. Wilkie's desk. But now that the first excitement of his pleasure in the conclusion of Wynt's affairs was past the recollection of his own began to rise again in a troublesome way. Even between the lines he was writing Mrs. Lewyn, mixed with his satisfaction at Vivian's doing just the right thing, ran suggestions of dark times coming and trouble that he was nearing every day.

But there was one trouble that could never

face him again; it was left dead and for ever behind—the temptation to put upon Hugh Wilkie's name a possible stain or upon Hugh Wilkie himself the possibility of self-reproach and shame.

The last *i* in his signature to Mrs. Lewyn had just got its dot when the door opened and Dr. McPherson stepped inside.

"Ah, how are you, Wilkie? I've been out of town and just come in, so that I had n't heard the lively news about those wards of yours till half an hour ago. I could n't keep off with my congratulations and took a moment to run in. So that young stickler is satisfied about the 'last will,' is he, after this? And Mrs. Vivian has found out how it happened that they're not her wards instead of yours? It's the best thing I've heard! Clears Judge Havisham up a little, too, in my mind, to tell the truth. A momentary yielding to a daughter like that, but left incomplete, and wiped out with his last words, we can excuse without lowering him from that high round in the ladder where we like to keep him, you know.

"By the way, I have n't heard you mention that lead-mine of yours of late. I was thinking of it the other day. I expected to hear great things from it before now. If it turns out a big fortune, you'll let me know, I hope. I shall want to be in with my congratulations."

Mr. Wilkie changed color almost impercepti-

bly. "It will not turn out a fortune, large or small, McPherson, thank you all the same. I'll accept your interest in it as the best dividend it makes."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, only that it wants a few thousand that I can't put in to bring the fortune out. It's there, I have no earthly doubt, but there it will have to stay."

"Whew! Do you mean it really? That's a nuisance, certainly; but after all, a few thousands don't amount to much."

"They did not once to me; but you don't know, perhaps, that luck has gone against me a good many times of late."

"I did hear something of the kind, I'm sorry to say. In fact I was thinking of it as I came in and wondering if it could bother you at all in connection with the mine. So I thought I'd find out, and if it were so it might give me just the opportunity I want to get a worry off my mind. I wonder if *you* knew that your father lent me a few hundreds when you and I were digging into our professions at the same time? He did, and they were more to me than twice as many thousands could be now. I paid them back, but I've carried principal and interest on my heart ever since, and I'd like to get rid of them if I can. I've had two or three legacies tumble over on to me since then and several strokes of luck besides,

to say nothing of steady work; so a sum that came in the other day I've no earthly use for. If you'll take it and pitch it into that mine of yours, I'll be obliged to you, that's all."

Mr. Wilkie felt his breath come and go for a minute with a quickened pulse. "I can't do it, McPherson," he said. "There's a risk, you know. It might not come back."

"I don't believe there's a bit of it. And besides, your father risked on a mighty unpromising claim when he took his chances on me. Nobody thought then I'd 'pan out' very much, if you recollect. So I'll just send in that little amount, if you will allow me, and it will be off my mind, whether it ever comes back or not. By the way, I'm as glad for that youngest Havisham shaver as for any of the rest of that thing. It is time he was set back in his native soil, if you want to see him growing anywhere very long. As for the real invalid of the place though, that daughter of Bent's, I believe I've hit the right thing with her. I compliment myself on that. She's coming right up."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A WHITE DAY, AND MORE TO FOLLOW.

It was a "white day" on the Havisham Place when its rightful owners, as all the old retainers considered Wynt and Cyp quite equally with Vivian, returned to their inheritance.

Mrs. Lewyn had come the day before and got the sunshine and the first crocuses into the house and her own cheery little belongings scattered about. Covers were taken off furniture; *bric-a-brac*, silver, and linen were brought out again; the horses came in from their winter quarters, Blackwing among them—Tom Adriance, hoping for better days, having contrived, by ways best known to himself, to keep him back from sale.

Waite had to come back when the horses did, and he was "off his base," Bent declared, with triumph and satisfaction at what was going on. It was "the lightest lifting he ever did," he answered as he brought back the furnishings that he had carried in rebellious spirit to the gate cottage not so many months before.

Burnham had been bustling about, looking actually almost handsome in the zeal and enthusiasm with which she assured herself that all was

as it should be in the house. And Barbie followed here and there, feasting her dark eyes. The boys of the young mistress she had loved so long and yet so little while ago would be at home in their mother's home now, at least till the youngest should be a man. They should tread the same floors her dainty foot had trod, and step only where they had a right. They should sleep where she had slept, and the morning sun should wake them streaming through the same windows where she had loved to have it enter; and they should be taking only what was their own.

But there was still another joy that was stirring her old heart till her lips could not keep still. Not a sound did she let any one hear, but she whispered the words noiselessly a hundred times to herself:

"No, there 's no stain left on that name any more! It 's just taken clean off for ever more. Thorpe Havisham was never a name that could carry a stain. One could n't hold on there. Who ever said it could? Just clean off, for ever more!"

And Bent!

Bent would not have cared if a hundred people had called him old or out of style just now. He was too redundant in happiness to trouble himself about a thing like that; and moreover in his own bones he felt that the youth of thirty years ago had come back.

The young gentlemen were to have "the old servants" to look after them, were they? Miss Vivian was to feel safe about them on that account?

Very well! She should see when she came back, and the whole world might look in, in the meantime, if they liked.

And he almost reproached himself that Mab's face would keep coming before his eyes, too, as he bustled about over his silver and linen or getting the fine china down again into use.

"It's not the thing, as I know, to be letting my own affairs come up at a time like this, Mr. Wynt," he said. "But if you could notice the color getting back into Mab's cheeks over there! And it's not all that's come back, the color is n't, as you might say. There's no girl had ever a tenderer lover, nor a stronger, than Jem's come round again—nor a humbler one, at the same time, as well. He can't seem to find fault enough with himself for the strange freak that took hold of him for a while. And if Mab keeps on doing as the doctor looks for her to do, I do n't see why she might n't—"

"Take Jem into the cottage some day?" asked Wynt, finishing the sentence where Bent seemed to stick. "I 'm sure I do n't see either. You 've got a 'two or three years' ' lease of it, at the least, and we 'll renew that when it is out, if I do n't very much mistake."

Wynt had been going quietly on at the store up to this time, only asking that he might get back to Cyp an hour or so earlier at night. He did not know why he should not keep at work, certainly, and there was no applicant for the place at this moment who was acceptable to Brainerd and Gray. It would require a pretty strong reason, of course, to take him away from his post at inconvenience to them.

And what to do next was a question that wanted a little deliberation, too. Mr. Wilkie left it a good deal to his decision, though his own wishes were made plain enough as to study in the office, either now or at a later day. The later day, naturally, would be after college, for which Wynt was already well fitted. But Cyp could not go to college, and how was he to be left behind?

Wynt might take a year or two of tutoring at home, and then begin at law; Mr. Wilkie would never rest till he saw him make his start at that. Or he might read in the office a year at once, so gaining time while they waited for Cyp to grow stouter, or for things to come round in any way so that Wynt need not feel his only place to be beside him.

"But take your time to think it over," Mr. Wilkie had said. "Haste makes waste, generally, where it is not absolutely called for; and there's no hurry here. Only I want to show the

bar, as soon as possible, that I've brought them the most promising young lawyer they've had offered them in many a long day."

Wynt smiled quietly in return, hardly lifting his eyes from a book Mr. Wilkie had taken down "just to give him a taste." "You may find I'm as stupid as that horse of Jem Dent's, that eats straw out of the freight boxes and munches it comfortably for oats," he said.

"Well, some young fellows might have noticed that a will was not witnessed," was the reply. "Still, allowance may be made for enthusiasm or any little weakness of that kind, in a given case."

Brainerd and Gray's, meantime, had carried its share in the effect the finding of the "last will" had directly or indirectly produced.

Warnock opened his lips to no one about it; his sentiments and sensations were such as he preferred keeping to himself. The partners congratulated Wynt and regretted his probable loss equally, divided between this and the unquestionable and most positive change that had appeared in Lee; and Mr. Brainerd could not comfortably forgive himself for the injustice he had so carelessly shown Wynt.

"Apology can't quite cover it," he could not help feeling and saying to himself. "And it's as hard to forgive Warnock for blinding me as myself for letting him do it, too. I can't con-

ceive what his motive could have been. Havisham never can have wronged him, and he must have known, in his conscience, that he had wronged no one else. Somehow I have not had my old confidence in that fellow of late; this knocks out the bottom from under him a good deal. I shall find a way to get rid of his services before many months go by."

"We shall lose Havisham of course now, I suppose," Mr. Gray said, when the subject came up. "He has not quite said he would go, if I understand."

"No; but it is the same thing. Whether he goes or stays, though, I believe I have him to thank for taking off the greatest trouble I had. He's got hold of Lee somehow at last, for good, if appearances promise the truth."

"Is that Havisham? Can he work miracles? I've been thinking one must have taken hold of Lee, the last two weeks. We shall lose him too, if this keeps up, shall we not? You'll have no excuse for tying him back from that college life he's pining for, eh?"

"I hope I may not, most sincerely," was the quiet reply.

As for Lee himself, every day Wynt remained in the store was one more treasured "white one" for him. "What it will ever be when you are gone out of it," he said, "it is n't worth while to think. But I'll tell you one thing; if I have

to grit my teeth to do it, I'm never going to let the whole thing, and Warnock in the midst of it, make my life miserable for me. I'm just going ahead, straight, for whatever work my day finds put into it, with no questions asked, and the comfort of knowing I've done it well and respected myself when I get through. I made up my mind that if there was enough to satisfy you in that, there was enough for me, and I'd try to strike in. It works well, too, so far. I bob round like a cork where I used to go under and suffocate, every time."

Wynt raised his eyes and looked searchingly into his friend's face. "I don't believe that's the whole of it either, Lee."

"Well, it's not then, if you will have it all out. I couldn't stand what you said about some One who had shown a bigger heart and stood under more for me than you. But I didn't take any stock in those things; I told you the truth; so I concluded to 'go and talk to Him about it,' as you said, and I did 'find out.' Found out the beginning of a few things at least, I mean; enough to make me feel I never want to let go."

"No!" said Wynt, his dark face lighted suddenly with one of his flashing smiles. "Hold on, and hold on tighter, for ever, the harder things pull!"

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